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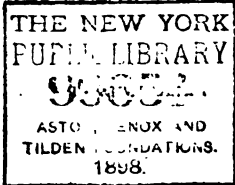
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A NEW EDITION.

OXFORD,
AT THE CLARENDON PRESS.

MDCCCIX.

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TO

MY MOST HONOURED PATRONS, TRUSTEES,

Appointed by the Will of the

HON. ROBERT BOYLE, Esq.

The Right Reverend Father in God

THOMAS,

LORD BISHOP OF LINCOLN,

SIR HENRY ASHURST, Kt. and Baronet,

SIR JOHN ROTHERAM, Serjeant at Law,

JOHN EVELYN Senior, Esq.

MOST HONOURED,

GOD having disposed the heart of that incomparable person, the Honourable ROBERT BOYLE, Esq. lately deceased, the glory of our nation and age, whose charity and goodness were as universal as his learning and fame ;
' to settle an annual salary for some Divine or
b ' preaching

‘ preaching Minister, who shall be enjoined to
‘ perform the offices following : 1. To preach
‘ eight Sermons in the year, for proving the
‘ Christian religion against notorious infidels,
‘ viz. Atheists, Deists, Pagans, Jews, and Ma-
‘ hometans ; not descending to any contro-
‘ versies that are among Christians themselves :
‘ the Lectures to be on the first Monday of
‘ the respective months of January, February,
‘ March, April, May, September, October,
‘ November ; in such Church as the trustees
‘ shall from time to time appoint : 2. To be
‘ assisting to all companies and encouraging
‘ them in any undertaking for propagating the
‘ Christian religion : 3. To be ready to satisfy
‘ such real scruples as any may have concern-
‘ ing those matters ; and to answer such new
‘ objections or difficulties as may be started,
‘ to which good answers have not yet been
‘ made :’ You have been pleased to believe
me able in some measure to perform these
offices, and to command this first essay to
be made public. I am very sensible of the
great honour, as well as the great extent and
difficulty of the task ; and shall endeavour, to
the utmost of my poor ability, to answer the
religious

DEDICATION.

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religious and generous design of that excellent person, and the good opinion you have entertained of,

My most honoured Patrons,

Your very obliged and

humble servant,

R. BENTLEY.

March 17, 1692.

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THE FOLLY OF ATHEISM,

And (what is now called)

DEISM:

EVEN WITH RESPECT TO

THE PRESENT LIFE.

SERMON I.

Preached March the 7th, 1694.

PSALM xiv. 1.

The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good.

I SHALL not now make any enquiry about the time and occasion and other circumstances of composing this Psalm: nor how it comes to pass, that with very little variation we have it twice over, both here the 14th, and again number the 53d. Not that these and such like are not important considerations in themselves; but that I think them improper now, when we are to argue and expostulate with such persons, as allow no divine authority

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to

to our text; and profess no greater, or, it may be they will say, less veneration for these sacred hymns, than for the profane songs of Anacreon or Horace. So that although I myself do really believe, that all such as *say in their hearts, There is no God*, are *foolish and corrupt*, both in understanding and will; because I see infinite Wisdom itself has pronounced them to be so: nevertheless this argument would at present have no force upon these men, till in due time and method we have evinced the sufficient authority of holy Scripture. But however there are other books extant, which they must needs allow of as proper evidence; even the mighty volumes of visible nature, and the everlasting tables of right reason; wherein, if they do not wilfully shut their eyes, they may read their own folly written by the finger of God, in a much plainer and more terrible sentence, than ^a Belshazzar's was by the hand upon the wall.

And as the impious principles of these persons do preclude any argumentation from the revealed Word of God; so they prevent us also from speaking at present to the second part of the text. The whole verse hath apparently two propositions; the one denoting the folly of Atheism, *The fool hath said in his*

^a Dan. v. 5.

heart,

heart, There is no God: the second declaring the corruption and flagitiousness of life which naturally attend it; *they are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good*. Now this latter part to a genuine Atheist is mere jargon, as he loves to call it; an empty sound of words without any signification. He allows no natural morality, nor any other distinction of good and evil, just and unjust; than as human institution and the modes and fashions of various countries denominate them. The most heroical actions or detestable villanies are in the nature of things indifferent to his approbation; if by secrecy they are alike concealed from rewards or punishments, from ignominy or applause. So that, till we have proved in its proper place the eternal and essential difference between virtue and vice, we must forbear to urge Atheists with the *corruption* and *abominableness* of their principles. But I presume, the first part of the text, the *folly and sottishness of Atheism* (which shall be the subject of this discourse) will be allowed to come home to their case, since they make such a noisy pretence to wit and sagacity; and I believe several of them first engage in that labyrinth of nonsense and folly, out of an absurd and preposterous affectation of seeming wiser than their neighbours.

But, before I proceed any farther, it will be necessary to clear and vindicate this expression of the Psalmist, *The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.* For I know not any interpreters that will allow it to be spoken of such as *flatly deny* the being of God; but of them that, believing his existence, do yet seclude him from directing the affairs of the world, from observing and judging the actions of men. I suppose they might be induced to this from the commonly received notion of an innate idea of God, imprinted upon every soul of man at their creation, in characters that can never be defaced. Whence it will follow, that speculative Atheism does only subsist in *our* speculation; whereas really human nature cannot be guilty of the crime: that indeed a few sensual and voluptuous persons may for a season eclipse this native light of the soul; but can never so wholly smother and extinguish it, but that at some lucid intervals it will recover itself again, and shine forth to the conviction of their consciences. And therefore they believed, that the words would not admit of a strict and rigorous interpretation; but ought to be so tempered and accommodated to the nature of things, as that they may describe those profane persons, who, though they *do not, nor can* really doubt *in their hearts* of the being of God, yet openly deny his *providence* in the course

course of their lives. Now, if this be all that is meant by the text, I do not see how we can defend, not only the fitness and propriety, but the very truth of the expression. As to that natural and indelible signature of God, which human souls in their first origin are supposed to be stamped with, I shall shew at a fitter opportunity that it is a mistake, and that we have no need of it in our disputes against Atheism. So that, being free from that prejudice, I interpret the words of the text in the literal acceptation, which will likewise take in the expositions of others. For I believe that the royal Psalmist in this comprehensive brevity of speech, *There is no God*, hath concluded all the various forms of impiety; whether such as excludes the Deity from governing the world by his providence, or judging it by his righteousness, or creating it by his wisdom and power: because the consequence and result of all these opinions is terminated in downright Atheism. For the divine inspection into the affairs of the world doth necessarily follow from the nature and being of God. And he that denies this, doth implicitly deny his existence: he may acknowledge what he will with his mouth, but *in his heart he hath said, There is no God. A God, therefore a Providence*, was a general argument of virtuous men, and not peculiar

to the Stoicks alone. And again, *No Providence, therefore no God*, was the most plausible reason, and the most frequent in the mouths of atheistical men. So that it seems to be agreed on all hands, that the existence of God and his government of the world do mutually suppose and imply one another.

There are some infidels among us, that not only disbelieve the Christian religion, but oppose the assertions of Providence, of the immortality of the soul, of an universal judgment to come, and of any incorporeal essence ; and yet, to avoid the odious name of Atheists, would shelter and screen themselves under a new one of Deists, which is not quite so obnoxious. But I think the text hath cut them short, and precluded this subterfuge ; inasmuch as it hath declared, that all such wicked principles are coincident and all one in the issue with the rankest Atheism : *The fool*, that doth exempt the affairs of the world from the ordination and disposal of God, *hath said in his heart, There is no God* at all. It was the opinion of many of the ancients, that ^b Epicurus introduced a Deity into his philosophy, not because he was persuaded of his existence, (for, when he had brought him upon the stage of nature,

^b Posidon. apud Ciceron. Plutarch. &c.

he made him only *muta persona*, and interdicted him from bearing any part in it,) but purely that he might not incur the offence of the magistrate. He was generally therefore suspected *verbis reliquisse Deum, re sustulisse*; to have framed on purpose such a contemptible paltry hypothesis about him, as indeed left the name and title of God in the world, but nothing of his nature and power. Just as a philosopher of our own age gave a ludicrous and fictitious notion about the *rest of the earth*, to evade the hard censure and usage which Galileo had lately met with. For my own part, as I do not exclude this reason from being a grand occasion of Epicurus's owning a God, so I believe that he and Democritus too were compelled to it likewise by the necessity of their own systems. For seeing they explained the phænomena of vision, imagination, and thought itself, by certain thin fleeces of atoms, that flow incessantly from the surfaces of bodies, and by their subtilty and fineness penetrate any obstacle, and yet retain the exact figures and lineaments of the several bodies from which they proceed; and in this manner insinuating themselves through the pores of human bodies into the contexture of the soul, do there excite sensation and perception of

* Mr. Des Cartes.

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them-

themselves : in consequence of this hypothesis they were obliged to maintain, that we could have no fancy, or idea, or conception of any thing, but what did really subsist either entire or in its several parts. Whence it followed, that mankind could have no imaginations of Jupiter or Mars, of Minerva or Isis, if there were not actually such beings in nature to emit those effluvia, which, gliding into the soul, must beget such imaginations. And thence it was, that those philosophers adapted their description of the Deity to the vulgar apprehensions of those times ; gods and goddesses innumerable, and all of human figure ; because otherwise the conceptions of mankind about them could not possibly be accounted for by their physiology. So that, if Epicurus and Democritus were in earnest about their philosophy, they did necessarily and really believe the *existence of the gods*. But then, as to the nature and authority of them, they bereaved that Jupiter of his thunder and majesty ; forbidding him to look or peep abroad, so much as to enquire what news in the infinite space about him ; but to content himself and be happy with an eternal laziness and dozing, unless some rambling troops of atoms, upon the dissolution of a neighbouring world, might chance to awake him. . Now because no Israelite in the days of the Psalmist is likely
to

to have been so curious about natural knowledge, as to believe the being of a God for such a quaint and airy reason as this, when he had once boldly denied his dominion over the world : and since there is not now one infidel living, so ridiculous as to pretend to solve the phænomena of sight, fancy, or cogitation by those fleeting superficial films of bodies ; I must beg leave to think, both that the fool in the text was a thorough confirmed Atheist ; and that the modern disguised Deists do only call themselves so for the former reason of Epicurus, to decline the public odium, and resentment of the magistrate, and that they cover the most arrant atheism under the mask and shadow of a Deity ; by which they understand no more than some eternal inanimate matter, some universal nature, and soul of the world, void of all sense and cogitation, so far from being endowed with infinite wisdom and goodness. And therefore in this present discourse they may deservedly come under that character which the text hath given of them, *of fools that have said in their hearts, There is no God.*

And now, having thus far cleared our way, in the next place we shall offer some notorious proofs of the gross folly and stupidity of Atheists.

If

If a person that had a fair estate in reverſion, which in all probability he would ſpeedily be poſſeſſed of, and of which he might reaſonably promiſe to himſelf a long and happy enjoyment, ſhould be aſſured by ſome ſkilful phyſician, that in a very ſhort time he would inevitably fall into a diſeaſe which would ſo totally deprive him of his underſtanding and memory, that he ſhould loſe the knowledge of all things without him, nay all conſciouſneſs and ſenſe of his own perſon and being: if, I ſay, upon a certain belief of this indication, the man ſhould appear overjoyed at the news, and be mightily tranſported with the diſcovery and expectation, would not all that ſaw him be aſtoniſhed at ſuch behaviour? Would they not be forward to conclude, that the diſtemper had ſeized him already, and even then the miſerable creature was become a mere *fool* and an idiot? Now the carriage of our Atheiſts or Deiſts is infinitely more amazing than this; no dotage ſo infatuate, no phrenſy ſo extravagant as theirs. They have been educated in a religion that inſtructed them in the knowledge of a ſupreme Being; a Spirit moſt excellently glorious, ſuperlatively powerful, and wiſe, and good, Creator of all things out of nothing; that hath endued the ſons of men, his peculiar favourites, with a rational ſpirit, and hath placed them as ſpectators in this noble
theatre

theatre of the world, to view and applaud these glorious scenes of earth and heaven, the workmanship of his hands ; that hath furnished them in general with a sufficient store of all things, either necessary or convenient for life ; and, particularly to such as fear and obey him, hath promised a supply of all wants, a deliverance and protection from all dangers : ^d *that they that seek him, shall want no manner of thing that is good.* Who, besides his munificence to them in this life, ^e *hath so loved the world, that he sent his only-begotten Son*, the express image of his substance, and partaker of his eternal nature and glory, to ^f *bring life and immortality to light*, and to tender them to mankind upon fair and gracious terms ; that if they submit to his ^g *easy yoke, and light burden*, and observe his commandments, *which are not grievous*, he then gives them ^h *the promise of eternal salvation* ; he hath ⁱ *reserved for them in heaven an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away* ; he hath prepared for them an unspeakable, unconceivable perfection of joy and bliss, ^k *things that eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man.* What a delightful and ravishing hypothesis of religion

^d Ps. xxiv. 9.^e John iii. 16.^f 2 Tim. i. 10.^g Matt. xi. 30.^h 1 John v. 3.ⁱ Heb. v. 9. 1 Pet. i. 4.^k 1 Cor. ii. 9.

in this? And in this religion they have had their education. Now let us suppose some great professor in Atheism to suggest to some of these men, that all this is mere dream and imposture; that there is no such excellent Being, as they suppose, that created and preserves them; that all about them is dark senseless matter, driven on by the blind impulses of fatality and fortune; that men first sprung up, like mushrooms, out of the mud and slime of the earth; and that all their thoughts, and the whole of what they call soul, are only various action and repercussion of small particles of matter, kept awhile a moving by some mechanism and clock-work, which finally must cease and perish by death. If it be true then (as we daily find it is) that men listen with complacency to these horrid suggestions; if they let go their hope of everlasting life with willingness and joy; if they entertain the thoughts of final perdition with exultation and triumph; ought they not to be esteemed most notorious ¹*fools*, even destitute of common sense, and abandoned to a callousness and numbness of soul?

What then, is heaven itself, with its *pleasures for evermore*, to be parted with so unconcernedly? ^m Is a *crown of righteousness*, a

¹ ἄσους καὶ ἄλογος καὶ ἀναίσθητος γένος. Max. Tyr. Diss. i.

^m 2 Tim. iv. 8. Jam. i. 12.

crown

crown of life, to be surrendered with laughter ?
" Is an *exceeding and eternal weight of glory*
too light in the balance against the hopeless
death of the Atheist, and utter extinction ?
It was a noble saying of the Emperor Marcus,
That he would not endure to live one day in
the world, if he did not believe it to be under
the government of Providence. Let us but
imagine that excellent person confuted and
satisfied by some Epicurean of his time, that
all was but atoms, and vacuum, and necessity,
and chance : would he have been so pleased
and delighted with the conviction ? Would
he have so triumphed in being overcome ? Or
rather, as he hath told us, would he not have
gone down with sorrow and despair to the
grave ? Did I but once see an Atheist lament
and bewail himself ; that upon a strict and
impartial examination he had found to his
cost, that all was a mistake ; that the preroga-
tive of human nature was vanished and gone ;
those glorious hopes of immortality and bliss,
nothing but cheating joys and pleasant de-
lusions ; that he had undone himself by losing
the comfortable error, and would give all the
world to have better arguments for religion :
there would be great hopes of prevailing upon
such an Atheist as this. But, alas ! there are

2 Cor. iv. 17.

none

none of them of this temper of mind ; there are none that ^o *understand and seek after God* ; they have *no knowledge*, nor any desire of it ; they ^p *thrust the word of God from them, and judge themselves unworthy of everlasting life* ; they willingly prefer darkness before light ; and obstinately choose to perish for ever in the grave, rather than be heirs of salvation in the resurrection of the just. These certainly are the *fools* in the text, indocile intractable fools, whose stolidity can baffle all arguments, and be proof against demonstration itself ; ^q *whose end* (as the words of St. Paul do truly describe them) *whose end* and very hope *is destruction*, an eternal deprivation of being ; *whose God is their belly*, the gratification of sensual lusts ; *whose glory is in their shame*, in the debasing of mankind to the condition of beasts ; *who mind earthly things*, who if (like that great Apostle) they were ^r *caught up to the third heaven*, would (as the spies did of Canaan) ^s *bring down an evil report* of those regions of bliss. And I fear, unless it please God by extraordinary methods ^t *to help their unbelief, and enlighten the eyes of their understanding*, they will carry their Atheism with them to the pit ;

^o Ver. 2. and 4. of this Psalm.

^q Phil. iii. 19.

^s Numb. xiii. 32.

^p Acts xiii. 46.

^r 2 Cor. xii. 2.

^t Mar. ix. 24. Eph. i. 19.

and

and the flames of hell only must convince them of their error.

This supine and inconsiderate behaviour of the Atheists is so extremely absurd, that it would be deemed incredible, if it did not occur to our daily observation; it proclaims aloud, that they are not led astray by their reasoning, but led captive by their lusts to the denial of God. When the very pleasures of paradise are contemned and trampled on, like pearls cast before swine; there is small hope of reclaiming them by arguments of reason. But however, as Solomon adviseth, we will answer these "*fools not according to their folly, lest we also be like unto them.*" It is expedient that we *put to silence the ignorance of these foolish men*, that believers may be the more confirmed and more resolute in the faith.

Did religion bestow heaven without any terms or conditions indifferently upon all; if the *crown of life* was hereditary, and free to good and bad; and not settled by covenant upon the elect of God only, such as ** live soberly and righteously and godly in this present world*; I believe there would be no such thing as an infidel among us. And without controversy it is the way and means of attaining to heaven, that makes profane scorners so wil-

* Prov. xxvi. 4.

* Tit. ii. 12.

lingly

dingly let go the expectation of it. It is not the articles of the creed, but the duty to God and their neighbour, that is such an inconsistent incredible legend. They will not practise the rules of religion, and therefore they cannot believe the promises and rewards of it.

But, however, let us suppose them to have acted like rational and serious men; and perhaps upon a diligent inquisition they have found, that the hope of immortality deserves to be *joyfully* quitted, and that either out of *interest*, or *necessity*.

I. And first, one may conceive indeed how there might possibly be a *necessity* of quitting it. It might be tied to such terms as would render it impossible ever to be obtained. For example; if it should be required of all the candidates of glory and immortality, to give a full and knowing assent to such things as are repugnant to common sense, as contradict the *κοινὰ ἐννοιαί*, the universal notions and indubitable maxims of reason; if they were to believe, that one and the same thing may *be* and *not be* at the same time and in the same respect; if, allowing the received ideas and denominations of numbers and figures and body, they must seriously affirm, that two and two do make a dozen, or that the diameter of a circle is as long as the circumference, or that *the same body*

body may be all of it in distant places at once. I must confess that the offers of happiness; upon such articles of belief as these, would be mere tantalizing of rational creatures; and the kingdom of heaven would become the inheritance of only idiots and fools. For, whilst a man of common capacity doth think and reflect upon such propositions, he cannot possibly bribe his understanding to give a verdict for their truth. So that he would be quite frustrated of the hope of reward, upon such unpracticable conditions as these; neither could he have any evidence of the reality of the promise, superior to what he is conscious to of the falsity of the means. Now if any Atheist can shew me, in the system of Christian religion, any such absurdities and repugnancies to our natural faculties, I will either evince them to be interpolations and corruptions of the faith, or yield myself a captive and a profelyte to his infidelity.

II. Or, 2dly, They may think it is the *interest* of mankind that there should be no heaven at all, because the labour to acquire it is more worth than the purchase; God Almighty (if there be one) having much over-valued the blessings of his presence. So that, upon a fair estimation, it is a greater advantage to take one's swing in sensuality, and have a glut of voluptuousness in this life, freely resigning

figning all pretences to future happiness; which, when a man is once extinguished by death, he cannot be supposed either to want or desire; than to be tied up by commandments and rules so contrary to flesh and blood; to *take up one's cross, to deny himself*, and refuse the satisfaction of natural desires. This indeed is the true language of Atheism, and the cause of it too. Were not this at the bottom, no man in his wits could contemn and ridicule the expectation of immortality. Now what power or influence can religion have upon the minds of these men, while not only their affections and lusts, but their supposed interest shall plead against it? But, if we can once silence this powerful advocate, we shall without much difficulty carry the cause at the bar of impartial reason.

Now here is a notorious instance of the *folly* of Atheists, that while they repudiate all title to the kingdom of heaven, merely for the present pleasure of body, and their boasted tranquillity of mind, besides the extreme madness in running such a desperate hazard after death, (which I will not now treat of,) they deprive themselves here of that very pleasure and tranquillity they seek for. For I shall now endeavour to shew, that religion itself gives us the

Mark viii. 34.

greatest

greatest delights and advantages even in this life also, though there should prove in the event to be no resurrection to another. ² *Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.*

But, before I begin that, I must occur to one specious objection both against this proposition and the past part of my discourse; namely, that religion doth perpetually haunt and disquiet us with dismal apprehensions of everlasting burnings in hell; and that there is no shelter or refuge from those fears, but behind the principles of Atheism.

(1.) First therefore I will freely acknowledge to the Atheists, that some part of what hath been said is not directly conclusive against them, if they say, that, before they revoked from the faith, they had sinned away all expectation of ever arriving at heaven; and consequently had good reason so *joyfully* to receive the news of annihilation by death, as an advantageous change for the everlasting torments of the damned. But, because I cannot expect that they will make such a shameless and senseless confession, and supply us with that invincible argument against themselves; I must say again, that to prefer final extinction before a happy immortality does

declare the most deplorable stupidity of mind. Nay, although they should confess that they believed themselves to be reprobates before they disbelieved religion, and took Atheism as a sanctuary and refuge from the terrors of hell ; yet still the imputation of *folly* will stick upon them, inasmuch as they chose Atheism as an opiate to still those frightening apprehensions by inducing a dulness and lethargy of mind, rather than they would make use of that active and salutary medicine, a hearty repentance ; that they did not know the ^a *riches of the goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering of God* ; and that a sincere amendment of life was never too late, ^b *Jesus Christ being the Saviour of all men, and a propitiation for the sins of the whole world ; who came into the world to save sinners, even the chief of them all ; and died for the ungodly, and his bitterest enemies.*

(2.) And, secondly, as to the *fears of damnation* ; those terrors are not to be charged upon religion itself, which proceed either from the want of religion, or superstitious mistakes about it. For as an honest and innocent man doth know the punishments which the laws of his country denounce against felons, and

^a Rom. ii. 4.

^b 1 Tim. iv. 10. 1 John v. 14. 1 Tim. i. 15. Rom. v. 6, 10.

murderers,

murderers, and traitors, without being terrified or concerned at them ; so a Christian, in truth as well as in name, though he believe the consuming vengeance prepared for the disobedient and unbelievers, is not at all dismayed at the apprehensions of it. Indeed it adds spurs and gives wings to his diligence ; it excites him to *work out his salvation with fear and trembling* ; a religious and ingenuous fear, that is tempered with hope and with love and unspeakable joy. But he knows, that, if he fears him who is ^d *able to destroy both soul and body in hell*, he needs not fear that his own soul or body shall ever go thither.

I allow that some debauched and profligate wretches, or some designing perfidious hypocrites, that are religious in outward profession, but *corrupt and abominable* in their works, are most justly as well as usually liable to these horrors of mind. It is not my business to defend or excuse such as these ; I must leave them, as long as they keep their *hardness and impenitent hearts*, to those gnawing and excruciating fears, those whips of the divine *Nemesis*, that frequently scourge even Atheists themselves. For the Atheists also can never wholly extinguish those horrible forebodings of conscience. They endeavour indeed to com-

^c Phil. ii. 12.

^d Matth. x. 28.

pose and charm their fears, but a thousand occasions daily awaken the sleeping tormentors. Any slight consideration either of themselves, or of any thing without; whatsoever they think on, or whatsoever they look on; all administer some reasons for suspicion and diffidence, lest possibly they may be in the wrong; and then it is a *fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God*. There are *they in great fear*, as it is in the fifth verse of this Psalm, under terrible presages of *judgment and fiery indignation*. Neither can they say, that these terrors, like tales about spectres, may disturb some small pretenders and puny novices, but dare not approach the *vere adepti*, the masters and rabbies of Atheism: § for it is well known both from ancient and modern experience, that the very boldest of them, out of their debauches and company, when they chance to be surpris'd with solitude or sickness, are the most suspicious and timorous and despondent wretches in the world: and that the boasted happy Atheist in the indolence of body, and an undisturbed calm and serenity of mind, is altogether as rare a creature as the *vir sapiens* was among the Stoics; whom they often met with in idea and description, in harangues and in books, but freely owned that

* Heb. x. 31.

† Heb. x. 27.

‡ Cic. Plutarch, &c.

he never had or was like to exist actually in nature.

And now, as to the present advantages which we owe to *religion*, they are very conspicuous; whether we consider mankind, first, *separately*; or secondly, under *society* and *government*.

1. And first, in a *single capacity*. How is a good Christian animated and cheered by a steadfast belief of the promises of the Gospel; of an everlasting enjoyment of perfect felicity, such as after millions of millions of ages is still youthful and flourishing and inviting as at the first? no wrinkles in the face, no grey hairs on the head of eternity; no end, no diminution, no satiety of those delights. What a warm and vigorous influence does a religious heart feel from a firm expectation of these glories! Certainly this hope alone is of inestimable value; it is a kind of anticipation and pledge of those joys; and at least gives him one heaven upon earth, though the other should prove a delusion. Now what are the mighty promises of Atheism in competition with these? let us know the glorious recompences it proposes. Utter extinction and cessation of being; to be reduced to the same condition, as if we never had been born. O dismal reward of infidelity! at which nature does shrink and shiver with horror. What

some of the ^blearnedest doctors among the Jews have esteemed the most dreadful of all punishments, and have assigned for the portion of the blackest criminals of the damned; so interpreting *Tophet*, *Abaddon*, *the Vale of Slaughter*, and the like, for final excision and deprivation of being; this Atheism exhibits to us, as an equivalent to heaven. It is well known what hath been disputed among Schoolmen to this effect. And it is an observation of Plutarch, that the generality of mankind, *πάντες καὶ γυναῖκες*, as well women as men, chose rather to endure all the punishments of hell; as described by the poets, than part with the hope of immortality, though immortal only in misery. I easily grant, that this would be a very hard bargain; and that *not to be at all* is more eligible, than *to be miserable always*; our Saviour himself having determined the question; ^k*Woe to that man, by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! good were it for that man, if he had never been born.* But however thus much it evidently shews, that this desire of immortality is a natural affection of the soul; it is *self-preservation* in the highest and truest meaning; it is interwoven in the very frame

^b Vide Pocockii Notas ad Portam Moſis, p. 158, &c.

ⁱ Plutarch., "Οτι ἐνὶ ζῆνι, &c. p. 1104, 1105. edit. Ruald.

^k Matth. xxvi. 24.

and

and constitution of man. How then can the Atheist reflect on his own hypothesis without extreme sorrow and dejection of spirit? Will he say, that, when once he is dead, this desire will be nothing; and that he that is not, cannot lament his annihilation? So indeed it would be hereafter according to his principles. But nevertheless, for the present, while he continues in life, (which we now speak of,) that dusky scene of horror, that melancholy prospect of final perdition will frequently occur to his fancy; the sweetest enjoyments of life will often become flat and insipid, will be damped and extinguished, be bittered and poisoned by the malignant and venomous quality of this opinion.

Is it not more comfortable to a man to think well of himself, to have a high value and conceit of the dignity of his nature, to believe a noble origination of his race, the offspring and image of the great King of Glory; rather than that men first proceeded, as vermin are thought to do, by the sole influence of the sun out of dirt and putrefaction?

Is it not a firmer foundation for contentment and tranquillity, to believe that all things were at first created, and are since continually ordered and disposed for the best, and that principally for the benefit and pleasure of man; than that the whole universe is mere bungling •

bungling and blundering ; no art or contrivance to be seen in it ; nothing effected for any purpose and design ; but all ill-favouredly cobbled and jumbled together by the unguided agitation and rude shuffles of matter ?

Can any man with a better support under affliction, than the friendship and favour of Omnipotence, of Infinite Wisdom and Goodness ; that is both able and willing, and knows how to relieve him ? ¹ Such a man *can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth him* ; he can patiently suffer all things with cheerful submission and resignation to the divine will. He has a secret spring of spiritual joy, and the continual feast of a good conscience within, that forbid him to be miserable. But what a forlorn destitute creature is the Atheist in distress ! He hath no friend in extremity, but poison, or a dagger, or a halter, or a precipice. A violent death is the last refuge of the Epicureans, as well as the Stoics. This, says ^m Lucretius, is the distinguishing character of a genuine son of our sect, that he will not endure to live in exile and want and disgrace out of a vain fear of death ; but dispatch himself resolutely into the state of eternal sleep and insensibility. And yet, for all this swaggering, not one of a hundred of them hath boldness enough to follow

¹ Phil. iv. 13.

^m Lib. iii.

the direction. The base and degenerate saying of one of them is very well known ; ^a That *life* is always *sweet*, and he should still desire to prolong it ; though, after he had been maimed and distorted by the rack, he should lastly be condemned to hang on a gibbet.

And then, as to the practical rules and duties of religion. As the miracles of our Lord are peculiarly eminent above the *lying wonders of dæmons*, in that they were not made out of vain ostentation of power, and to raise unprofitable amazement ; but for the real benefit and advantage of men, by feeding the hungry, healing all sorts of diseases, ejecting of devils, and reviving the dead : so likewise the commands which he hath imposed on his followers are not like the absurd ceremonies of Pagan idolatry, the frivolous rites of their initiations and worship, that might look like incantation and magic, but had no tendency in their nature to make mankind the happier. Our Saviour hath enjoined us a *reasonable service*, accommodated to the rational part of our nature. All his laws are in themselves, abstracted from any consideration of recompence, conducing to the temporal interest of them that observe them. For what can be

^a Mæcenas apud Senec. Ep. ci. Debilem facito manu, debilem pede, coxa, &c.

• Rom. xii. 1,

more

more availing to a man's health, or his credit, or estate, or security in this world, than charity and meekness, than sobriety and temperance, than honesty and diligence in his calling? Do not pride and arrogance infallibly meet with contempt? Do not contentiousness and cruelty and study of revenge seldom fail of retaliation? Are not envious and covetous, discontented and anxious minds tormentors to themselves? Do not we see, that slothful and intemperate and incontinent persons destroy their bodies with diseases, their reputation with disgrace, and their families with want? Are adultery and fornication forbidden only by Moses and Christ? or do not Heathen law-givers punish such enormities with fines or imprisonment, with exile or death? It was an objection of P Julian the Apostate, that there were no new precepts of morality in our religion: *Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife.* Why all the world, says he, is agreed about these commandments; and, in every country under heaven, there are laws and penalties made to enforce all the ten, excepting only the *sabbath*, and the *worship of strange gods.* We can answer him another way; but he may make our infidels ashamed to complain

P Julianus apud Cyrillum, p. 134.

of those ordinances as hard impositions, which the sense of all nations has thought to be reasonable; which not only the philosophers of Greece and Italy, and the learned world; but the Banians of Mogul, the Talapoins of Siam, the Mandarins of China, the moralists of Peru and Mexico, all the wisdom of mankind have declared to be necessary duties. Nay, if the Atheists would but live up to the ethics of Epicurus himself, they would make few or no proselytes from the Christian religion. For none revolt from the faith for such things as are thought peculiar to Christianity: not because they must *love and pray for their enemies*, but because they must not poison or stab them; not because they must not *look upon a woman to lust after her*, but because they are much more restrained from committing the act. If wanton glances and lascivious thoughts had been permitted by the Gospel, and only the gross act forbidden; they would have apostatized nevertheless. This we may conjecture from what *Plato* and others have told us, that it was commonly ἀνέμετα ἡδονῶν καὶ ἐπιθυμιῶν, immoderate affections and lusts, that in the very times of Paganism induced men to be Atheists. It seems their impure and brutal sensuality was too much confined

* Matth. v. 44.

† Verse 28.

* Plato de Legib. lib. x. p. 886. edit. Steph.

by

by the religion of those countries, where even Venus and Bacchus had their temples. Let not therefore voluptuous Atheists lay all the fault of their sins upon the infirmity of human nature ; nor plead that flesh and blood cannot resist those temptations, which have all their force and prevalence from long custom and inveterated habit. What enticement, what pleasure is there in common profane swearing ? yet neither the fear of God nor of the law will persuade men to leave it. It is prevailing example that hath now made it fashionable ; but it hath not always been so, nor will be hereafter. So other epidemical vices, they are rise and predominant only for a season, and must not be ascribed to human nature in the lump. In some countries intemperance is a necessary part of conversation ; in others sobriety is a virtue universal, without any respect to the duties of religion. Nor can they say, that this is only the difference of climate that inclines one nation to concupiscence and sensual pleasures, another to blood-thirstiness and desire of revenge. It would discover great ignorance in history, not to know that in all climates a whole people has been over-run with some recently invented or newly imported kind of vice, which their grandfathers never knew. In the latest accounts of the country of Guiana we are told, that the eating of human flesh is the

the beloved pleasure of those savages: two nations of them by mutual devouring are reduced to two handfuls of men. When the Gospel of our Saviour was preached to them, they received it with gladness of heart; they could be brought to forego plurality of wives, though that be the main impediment to the conversion of the East Indies. But the great stumbling-block with these Americans, and the only rock of offence, was the forbidding them *to eat their enemies*: that irresistible temptation made them quickly to revolt and relapse into their infidelity. What must we impute this to? to the temperature of the air, to the nature of the soil, to the influence of the stars? Are these barbarians of man-eating constitutions, that they so hanker after this inhuman diet, which we cannot imagine without horror? Is not the same thing practised in other parts of that continent? Was it not so in Europe of old, and is it not now so in Africa? If an eleventh commandment had been given, *Thou shalt not eat human flesh*; would not these cannibals have esteemed it more difficult than all the ten? And would not they have really had as much reason as our Atheists, to plead the power of the temptation, and the propensity of flesh and blood? How impudent then are the Atheists, that traduce the easy and gracious conditions of the Gospel, as unreasonable

able and tyrannical impositions ! *Are not God's ways equal*, O ye children of destruction, *and are not your ways unequal ?*

II. Secondly and lastly, for the good influence of religion upon communities and governments, *habemus confitentes reos* ; it is so apparent and unquestionable, that it is one of the objections of the Atheists, that it was first contrived and introduced by politicians, to bring the wild and straggling herds of mankind under subjection and laws. *† Out of thy own mouth shalt thou be judged, thou wicked servant.* Thou sayest that the wise institutors of government, souls elevated above the ordinary pitch of men, thought religion necessary to civil obedience. Why then dost thou endeavour to undermine this foundation, to undo this cement of society, and to reduce all once again to thy imaginary state of nature and original confusion ? No community ever was or can be begun or maintained, but upon the basis of religion, What government can be imagined without judicial proceedings ? and what methods of judicature without a religious oath ? which implies and supposes an omniscient Being, as conscious to its falsehood or truth, and a revenger of perjury. So that the very nature of an oath (and therefore of society also) is

† Luke xix. 22.

subverted

subverted by the Atheist; who professeth to acknowledge nothing superior to himself, no omnipresent Observer of the actions of men. For an "Atheist to compose a *system of politics* is as absurd and ridiculous as Epicurus's sermons were about *sanctity and religious worship*. But there was hope, that the doctrine of absolute uncontrollable power, and the formidable name of Leviathan might flatter and bribe the government into a *toleration of infidelity*. We need have no recourse to notions and supposition; we have sad experience and convincing example before us, what a rare constitution of government may be had in a whole nation of Atheists. The natives of Newfoundland and New France in America, as they are *said* to live without any sense of religion, so they are *known* to be destitute of its advantages and blessings; without any law, or form of community; without any literature, or sciences, or arts; no towns, no fixed habitations, no agriculture, no navigation. And it is entirely owing to the power of religion, that the whole world is not at this time as barbarous as they. And yet I ought

* Hobbes de Cive, Leviathan.

* *Ἐπεὶ Ὀσέβειος*, Laert. De sanctitate et de pietate adversus Deos. *Cic.*

† De Laet, p. 34, 47, 50. Voyage du Sieur de Champlain, p. 28, et 93.

not to have called these miserable wretches *a nation of Atheists*. They cannot be said to be of the Atheist's opinion, because they have no opinion at all in the matter: they do not say in their hearts, *There is no God*; for they never once deliberated, if there was one or no. They no more *deny* the existence of a Deity, than they deny the Antipodes, the Copernican system, or the Satellites Jovis; about which they have had no notion or conception at all. It is the *ignorance* of those poor creatures, and not their *impiety*: their ignorance, as much to be pitied, as the impiety of the *Atheists* to be detested and punished. It is of mighty importance to the government to put some timely stop to the spreading contagion of this *pestilence that walketh by day*, that dares to disperse its cursed seeds and principles in the face of the sun. The *fool* in the text had only said *in his heart, There is no God*: he had not spoken it aloud, nor openly blasphemed, in places of public resort. There is too much reason to fear, that some of all orders of men, even magistracy itself, have taken the infection; a thing of dreadful consequence, and most imminent danger. ² Epicurus was somewhat wiser than ordinary, when he so earnestly advised his disciples against meddling in public

² Plutarch. *Λαδὲ βίωσις*. Lucret. &c.

affairs :

affairs: he knew the nature and tendency of his own philosophy; that it would soon become suspected and odious to a government, if ever Atheists were employed in places of trust. But, because he had made one great rule superior to all, *that every man's only good was pleasure of body, and contentment of mind*, hence it was, that men of ambitious and turbulent spirits, that were dissatisfied and uneasy with privacy and retirement, were allowed by his own principle to engage in matters of state: and there they generally met with that fortune which their master foresaw. Several cities of ^a Greece, that had made experiment of them in public concerns, drove them out, as incendiaries and pests of commonweals, by severe edicts and proclamations. Atheism is by no means tolerable in the most private condition; but if it aspire to authority and power; if it acquire the command of an army or a navy; if it get upon the bench, or into the senate, or on a throne; what then can be expected but the basest cowardice and treachery, but the foulest prevarication in justice, but betraying and selling the rights and liberties of a people, but arbitrary government and tyrannical oppression? Nay, if Atheism were once, as I may say, the national religion, it

^a Plutarch. *Ὅτι ἐπὶ πόλιν; ζῆν.* Cicero, Athenæus, Ælian, &c.

would make its own followers the most miserable of men; it would be the kingdom of Satan divided against itself; and the land would be soon brought to desolation. ^b Josephus, who knew them, hath informed us, that the Sadducees, those Epicureans among the Jews, were not only rough and cruel to men of a different sect from their own, but perfidious and inhuman one towards another. This is the genuine spirit and the natural product of Atheism. No man, that adheres to that narrow and selfish principle, can ever be just or generous or grateful, ^c unless he be sometime overcome by good-nature and a happy constitution. No Atheist, as such, can be a true friend, an affectionate relation, or a loyal subject. The appearance and shew of mutual amity among them is wholly owing to the smallness of their number, and to the obligations of a faction. It is like the friendship of pickpockets and highwaymen, that are said to observe strict justice among themselves, and never to defraud a comrade of his share of the booty. But, if we could imagine a whole nation to be cut-purses and robbers, would there then be kept that square-dealing and equity in such a monstrous *den of thieves*?

^b Josephus de Bello Judaico, l. ii. c. 12.

^c Si sibi ipse consentiat, et non interdum naturæ bonitate vincatur. *Cic. de Offic. i. 2.*

And

And if Atheism should be supposed to become universal in this nation, (which seems to be designed and endeavoured, though we know the gates of hell shall not be able to prevail,) farewell all ties of friendship and principles of honour; all love for our country and loyalty to our prince; nay, farewell all government and society itself, all professions and arts, and conveniencies of life, all that is laudable or valuable in the world.

May the Father of Mercies and God of infinite Wisdom reduce the foolish from their errors, and make them *wise unto salvation*; confirm the sceptical and wavering minds; and so prevent us, that stand fast, in all our doings, and further us with his continual help, that we may not be of them that draw back unto perdition, but of them that believe to the saving of the soul. *Amen.*

Matter and Motion cannot think :

OR,

A CONFUTATION OF ATHEISM

FROM

THE FACULTIES OF THE SOUL.

SERMON II,

Preached April the 4th, 1692.

ACTS xvii. 27, 28.

That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him; though he be not far from every one of us: for in him we live, and move, and have our being,

THESE words are a part of that discourse which St. Paul had at Athens. He had not been long in that inquisitive and pragmatistical city, but we find him *encountered by the Epicureans and Stoics*, two sorts of people that were ill qualified for the Christian faith: the one, by reason of their carnal affections,

* ACTS xvii. 18.

either believing no God at all ; or that he was like unto themselves, dissolved in ^b laziness and ease : the other, out of spiritual pride, presuming to assert, that ^c a wise man of their sect was equal, and in some cases superior to the majesty of God himself. These men, ^d *corrupted through philosophy and vain deceit, took our Apostle, and carried him unto Arcopagus,* (a place in the city, whither was the greatest resort of travellers and strangers, of the gravest citizens and magistrates, of their orators and philosophers,) to give an account of himself and the new doctrine that he spoke of : ^e *For, say they, thou bringest strange things to our ears ; we would know therefore what these things mean.* The Apostle, who was to speak to such a promiscuous^o assembly, has with most admirable prudence and art so accommodated his discourse, that every branch and member of it is directly opposed to a known error and prejudice of some party of his hearers. I will beg leave to be the more prolix in explaining the whole ; because it will be a ground and introduction not only to this present, but some other subsequent discourses.

^b Ἀργὸν καὶ ἀμελές.

^c Arriani Epictet. l. i. c. 12. Ὡς κατάγει τὸν λόγον ἐπὶ χεῖρων τῶν Θεῶν, οὐδὲ μικρότερος. Seneca, Ep. 53. Est aliquid quo sapiens antecedit Deum : ille naturæ beneficio, non suo sapiens est.

^d Ver. 19.

^e Ver. 20.

From

From the inscription of an altar. to the Unknown God, which is mentioned by Heathen authors, ^f Lucian, Philostratus, and others, he takes occasion (v. 24.) to declare unto them, *that God, that made the world, and all things therein.* This first doctrine, though admitted by many of his auditors, is directly both against Epicureans, that ascribed the origin and frame of the world not to the power of God, but the fortuitous concourse of atoms; and Peripatetics, that supposed all things to have been eternally, as they now are, and never to have been made at all, either *by* the Deity or *without* him. Which God, says he, *seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in the temples made with hands, neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things.* This is opposed to the civil and vulgar religion of Athens, which furnished and served the Deity with temples and sacrifices, as if he had really needed habitation and sustenance. And that the common Heathen had such mean apprehensions about the indigency of their gods, appears plainly, to name no more, from Aristophanes's *Plutus*, and the dialogues of Lucian. But the philoso-

^f Lucianus in Philopat. Philostrat. de vita Apol. lib. vi. c. 2. Pausan. in Eliacis.

^g Verse 25.

phers were not concerned in this point: all parties and sects, even the ^h Epicureans themselves, did maintain (τὸ αὐταρκές) the self-sufficiency of the Godhead; and seldom or never sacrificed at all, unless in compliance and condescension to the custom of their country. There is a very remarkable passage in Tertullian's Apology, ⁱ *Who forces a philosopher to sacrifice?* &c. It appears from thence, that the philosophers, no less than the Christians, neglected the Pagan worship and sacrifices; though what was connived at in the one was made highly penal and capital in the other. ^k *And hath made of one blood all nations of men, for to dwell on all the face of the earth; and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bound of their habitation.* This doctrine about the beginning of human race, though agreeable enough to the Platonists and Stoics, is apparently levelled against the Epicureans and Aristotelians: one of whom produced their primitive men from mere accident or mechanism; the other denied that man had any beginning at all, but had eternally continued thus by succession and propagation. Neither

^h Lucret. ii. Ipsa suis pollens opibus, nihil indiga nostri.

ⁱ Tertull. Apol. cap. 46. Quis enim philosophum sacrificare compellit? Quinimmo et deos vestros palam destruunt, et superstitiones vestras commentariis quoque accusant.

^k Ver. 26.

were

were the commonalty of Athens unconcerned in this point. For although, as we learn from ¹Isocrates, Demosthenes, and others of their countrymen, they professed themselves to be *αὐτόχθονες*, *Aborigines*, not transplanted by colonies or otherwise from any foreign nation, but born out of their own soil in Attica, and had the same earth for their parent, their nurse, and their country; and though some perhaps might believe, ^mthat all the rest of mankind were derived from them, and so might apply and interpret the words of the Apostle to this foolish tradition; yet that conceit of deriving the whole race of men from the *Aborigines* of Attica was entertained but by a few; for they generally allowed that the ⁿEgyptians, and Sicilians, and some others, were *Aborigines* also as well as themselves. Then follow the words of the text, ^o*That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him; though he be not far from every one of us: for in him we live, and move, and have our being.* And this he confirms by the authority of a writer that lived about three hundred years before; *as certain also of your*

¹ Isocrates in Paneg. Demosth. in Epitaph. Cic. Orat. pro Placco. Euripides, &c.

^m Diog. Laert. in Præf.

ⁿ Thucyd. lib. vi. Herodot. &c.

^o Verse 27, 28.

own poets have said, For we are also his offspring. This indeed was no argument to the ^p Epicurean auditors; who undervalued all argument from authority, and especially from the poets. Their master Epicurus had boasted, ^q that in all his writings he had not cited one single authority out of any book whatsoever. And the poets they particularly hated; because on all occasions they introduced the ministry of the gods, and taught the separate existence of human souls. But it was of great weight and moment to the common people, who held the poets in mighty esteem and veneration, and used them as their masters of morality and religion. And the other sects too of philosophers did frequently adorn and confirm their discourses by citations out of poets. ^r *Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device.* This is directly levelled against the gross idolatry of the vulgar, (for the philosophers are not concerned in it,) that believed the very statues of gold, and silver, and other materials, to be God, and terminated their prayers in those images; as I might shew from many passages

^p Plutarch. de aud. Poet. et contra Colot.

^q Laert. in vita Epicuri.

^r Verse 29.

of Scripture, from the apologies of the primitive Christians, and the Heathen writers themselves. * *And the times of this ignorance God winked at,* (the meaning of which is, as upon a like occasion the same Apostle hath expressed it, that *in times past he suffered all nations to walk in their own ways,*) *but now commandeth every one to repent: because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.* Hitherto the Apostle had never contradicted all his audience at once: though at every part of his discourse some of them might be uneasy; yet others were of his side, and all along a moderate silence and attention was observed; because every point was agreeable to the notions of the greater party. But, *when they heard of the resurrection of the dead,* the interruption and clamour became universal; so that here the Apostle was obliged to break off, and *depart from among them.* What could be the reason of this general dissent from the notion of the resurrection, since almost all of them believed the immortality of the soul? St. Chrysostom hath a conceit, that the Athenians took *'Aváσa-*

* Verse 30, 31.

† Acts xiv. 16.

" Verse 33.

οις (the original word for *resurrection*) to be preached to them as a goddess, and in this fancy he is followed by some of the moderns. The ground of the conjecture is the 18th verse of this chapter, where some said, *What will this babbler say?* other some, *He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods*, (ζένων δαιμονίων, *strange deities*, which comprehends both sexes,) *because he preached unto them* (Ἰησοῦ καὶ τὴν Ἀνάστασιν) *Jesus and the Resurrection*. Now, say they, it could not be said *deities* in the plural number, unless it be supposed, that Ἀνάστασις is a goddess, as well as *Jesus a God*. But we know, such a permutation of number is frequent in all languages. We have another example of it in the very text, ^x *as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring*: and yet the Apostle meant only one, ^y Aratus the Cilician, his countryman, in whose astronomical poem this passage is now extant. So that although he preached to the Athenians *Jesus alone*, yet by a common mode of speech he might be called, *a setter forth of strange gods*. It is my opinion, that the general distaste and clamour proceeded from a mistake about the nature of the Christian resurrection. The word *resurrection* (ἀναστήσασθαι and

^x Verse 28.

^y Arati Phœn. v. 5. Πάντη δὲ Δίος κεχρημένα πάντες, Τῷ γὰρ καὶ γένος ἰσμεύ.

ἀνάστασις)

ἀνάστασις) was well enough known amongst the Athenians, as appears at this time from ² Homer, Æschylus, and Sophocles; they could hardly then possibly imagine it to signify a goddess. But then it always denoted a returning from the state of the dead to this present world, to eat and drink and converse upon earth, and so after another period of life to die again as before. And Festus, a Roman, seems to have had the same apprehensions about it. For, when he declares the case of St. Paul his prisoner to King Agrippa, he tells him, that the accusation was only about certain questions of the Jewish superstition; and ³ *of one Jesus which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive*. So that when the Athenians heard him mention the resurrection of the dead, which according to their acceptation of the word was a contradiction to common sense, and to the experience of all places and ages, they had no patience to give any longer attention. His ^b words seemed to them as idle tales, as the first news of our Saviour's resurrection did to the Apostles themselves. All interrupted and mocked him, except a few, that seem to have;

² Hom. II. Ω. 551. Ὅρθε μιν ἀνστήσεις, &c. Æsch. Eumen. 655. Ἄνδρὸς δ' ἐπιιδάν αἵ μ' ἀνασπάσῃ κόινις Ἄπαξ ἀνόντος, οὔτις ἔς' ἀνάστασις. Soph. Electra, 136. Ἄλλ' οὗτοι τόν γ' ἐξ αἵδα παγκοίνῃ λήμας πατήρ ἀνστήσεις, οὔτε γούσις, ἢ λιταῖς.

^a Acts xxv. 9.

^b Luke xxiv. 11.

understood him aright, which said *they would hear him again of this matter*. Just as when our Saviour said in an allegorical and mystical sense, ^c *Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you*, the hearers understood him literally and grossly: ^d *The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat? This is a hard saying; who can hear it?* ^e *And from that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.*

I have now gone through this excellent discourse of the Apostle, in which many most important truths are clearly and succinctly delivered; such as the existence, the spirituality, and all-sufficiency of God, the creation of the world, the origination of mankind from one common stock according to the history of Moses, the divine Providence in over-ruling all nations and people, the new doctrine of repentance by the preaching of the Gospel, the resurrection of the dead, and the appointed day of an universal judgment. To all which particulars, by God's permission and assistance, I shall say something in due time. But at present I have confined myself to that near and internal and convincing argument of the

^c John vi. 53.^d Ver. 60.^e Ver. 66.

being

being of God, which we have from human nature itself; and which appears to be principally here recommended by St. Paul in the words of the text; *That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him; though he be not far from every one of us: for in him* (that is, by his power) *we live, and move, and have our being.*

The proposition, which I shall speak to from this text, is this: that the very life, and vital motion, and the formal essence and nature of man, is wholly owing to the power of God; and that the consideration of ourselves, of our own souls and bodies, doth directly and nearly conduct us to the acknowledgment of his existence. And,

1. I shall prove, that there is an immaterial substance in us, which we call soul and spirit, essentially distinct from our bodies; and that this spirit doth necessarily evince the existence of a supreme and spiritual Being. And,

2. That the organical structure of human bodies, whereby they are fitted to live and move and be vitally informed by the soul, is unquestionably the workmanship of a most wise, and powerful, and beneficent Maker. But I will reserve this latter part for the next opportunity; and my present undertaking shall be this, to evince the being of God from the consideration of human souls.

(1.) And first, I say, there is an immaterial substance in us, which we call soul, essentially distinct from our bodies. I shall lay it down as self-evident, that there is something in our composition, that thinks and apprehends, and reflects and deliberates; that determines and doubts, consents and denies; that wills, and demurs, and resolves, and chooses, and rejects; that receives various sensations and impressions from external objects, and produces voluntary motions of several parts of our bodies. This every man is conscious of; neither can any one be so sceptical as to doubt of or deny it; that very *doubting* or *denying* being part of what I would suppose, and including several of the rest in their ideas and notions. And in the next place it is as self-evident, that these faculties and operations of thinking, and willing, and perceiving, must proceed from something or other as their efficient cause; mere nothing being never able to produce any thing at all. So that if these powers of cogitation, and volition, and sensation, are neither inherent in matter as such, nor producible in matter by any motion and modification of it, it necessarily follows, that they proceed from some cogitative substance, some incorporeal inhabitant within us, which we call spirit and soul.

1.) But first, these faculties of sensation and perception are not inherent in matter as such :
for,

for, if it were so, what monstrous absurdities would follow ! every stock and stone would be a percipient and rational creature. We should have as much feeling upon clipping a hair of the head, as upon pricking a nerve. Or rather, as men, that is, as a complex being compounded of many vital parts, we should have no feeling nor perception at all. For every single atom of our bodies would be a distinct animal, endued with self-consciousness and personal sensation of its own. And a great number of such living and thinking particles could not possibly by their mutual contact and pressing and striking compose one greater individual animal, with one mind and understanding, and a vital consension of the whole body, any more than a swarm of bees, or a crowd of men and women, can be conceived to make up one particular living creature compounded and constituted of the aggregate of them all.

2.) It remains therefore, secondly, that feeling matter in general, as matter, has not any sensation or thought ; if it have them at all, they must be the result of some modification of it : it must acquire them by some organical disposition ; by such and such determinate motions, by the action and passion of one particle upon another. And this is the opinion of every Atheist and counterfeit Deist of these times, that believes there is no substance but

matter, and excludes all incorporeal nature out of the number of beings.

Now, to give a clear and full confutation of this atheistical assertion, I will proceed in this method.

I. First I will give a true notion and idea of matter ; whereby it will again appear that it has no inherent faculty of sense and perception.

II. I will prove, that no particular sort of matter, as the brain and animal spirits, hath any power of sense and perception.

III. I will shew, that motion in general superadded to matter cannot produce any sense and perception.

IV. I will demonstrate, that no particular sort of motion, as of the animal spirits through muscles and nerves, can beget sense and perception.

V. I will evince, that no action and passion of the animal spirits, one particle upon another, can create any sense and perception.

VI. I will answer the Atheist's argument of matter of fact and experience in brute beasts ; which, say they, are allowed to be mere matter, and yet have some degree of sense and perception.

And first I will give a true notion and idea
of

of matter ; whereby it will appear that it has no inherent faculty of sense and perception. And I will offer no other but what all competent judges, and even Atheists themselves, do allow of ; and which, being part of the Epicurean and Democritean philosophy, is providentially one of the best antidotes against their other impious opinions ; as the oil of scorpions is said to be against the poison of their stings. When we frame in our minds any notion of matter, we conceive nothing else but extension and bulk, which is impenetrable, and divisible, and passive ; by which three properties is understood, that any one particular quantity of matter doth hinder all other from intruding into its place, till itself be removed out of it ; that it may be divided and broken into numerous parts of different sizes and figures, which by various ranging and disposing may produce an immense diversity of surfaces and textures ; that, if it once be bereaved of motion, it cannot of itself acquire it again, but it either must be impelled by some other body from without, or (say we, though not the Atheist) be intrinsically moved by an immaterial self-active substance, that can penetrate and pervade it. Wherefore in the whole nature and idea of matter we have nothing but substance with magnitude, and figure, and situation, and a capacity of being

moved and divided. So that no parts of matter, considered by themselves, are either hot or cold, either white or black, either bitter or sweet, or betwixt those extremes. All the various mixtures and conjugations of atoms do beget nothing but new inward texture, and alteration of surface. No sensible qualities, as light, and colour, and heat, and sound, can be subsistent in the bodies themselves, absolutely considered, without a relation to our eyes, and ears, and other organs of sense. These qualities are only the effects of our sensation, which arise from the different motions upon our nerves from objects without, according to their various modification and position. For example; when pellucid colourless glass or water, by being beaten into powder or froth, do acquire a very intense whiteness, what can we imagine to be produced in the glass or water but a new disposition of parts? nay, an object under the self-same disposition and modification, when it is viewed by us under differing proportions, doth represent very differing colours, without any change at all in itself. For that very same opaque and white powder of glass, when it is seen through a good microscope, doth exhibit all its little fragments pellucid and colourless; as the whole appeared to the naked eye, before it was pounded. So that
whiteness,

whiteness, and redness, and coldness, and the like, are only ideas and vital passions in us that see and feel ; but can no more be conceived to be real and distinct qualities in the bodies themselves, than roses or honey can be thought to smell or taste their own sweetness, or an organ be conscious of its music, or gun-powder of its flashing and noise.

Thus far then we have proved, and it is agreed on all hands, that in our conception of any quantity of body there is nothing but figure, and site, and a capacity of motion : which motion, if it be actually excited in it, doth only cause a new order and contexture of parts : so that all the ideas of sensible qualities are not inherent in the inanimate bodies, but are the effects of their motion upon our nerves, and sympathetical and vital passions produced within ourselves.

II. Our second enquiry must be, what it is in the constitution and composition of a man that hath the faculty of receiving such ideas and passions ? Let us carry in our minds this true notion of body in general, and apply it to our own substance, and observe what prerogatives this rational machine (as the Atheists would make us to be) can challenge above other parcels of matter. We observe then, in this understanding piece of clock-work, that this body, as well as other senseless matter,

has colour, and warmth, and softness, and the like. But we have proved it before, and it is acknowledged, that these qualities are not subsistent in those bodies, but are ideas and sensations begotten in something else: so that it is not blood and bones that can be conscious of their own hardness, or redness; and we are still to seek for something else in our frame and make, that must receive these impressions. Will they say that these ideas are performed by the brain? But the difficulty returns upon them again; for we perceive that the like qualities of softness, whiteness, and warmth, do belong to the brain itself; and since the brain is but body, those qualities (as we have shewn) cannot be inherent in it, but are the sensations of some other substance without it. It cannot be the brain then, which imagines those qualities to be in itself.

But, they may say, it is not the gross substance of the brain that causes perception, but the animal spirits that have their residence there; which are void of sensible qualities, because they never fall under our senses by reason of their minuteness. But we conceive by our reason, though we cannot see them with our eyes, that every one of these also hath a determinate figure; they are spheres, or cubes, or pyramids, or cones, or of some shape or other that is irregular and nameless; and

and all these are but modes and affections of magnitude ; and the ideas of such modes can no more be subsistent in the atoms so modified, than the idea of redness was just now found to be inherent in the blood, or that of whiteness in the brain. And what relation or affinity is there between a minute body and cogitation, any more than the greatest ? Is a small drop of rain any wiser than the ocean ? or do we grind inanimate corn into living and rational meal ? My very nails, or my hair, or the horns and hoofs of a beast, may bid as fair for understanding and sense, as the finest animal spirits of the brain,

III. But thirdly, they will say, it is not the bulk and substance of the animal spirits, but their motion and agility, that produces cogitation and sense. If then motion in general, or any degree of its velocity, can beget cogitation ; surely a ship under sail must be a very intelligent creature, though while she lies at anchor those faculties must be asleep : some cold water or ice may be phlegmatic and senseless ; but, when it boils in a kettle, it has wonderful heats of thinking, and ebullitions of fancy. Nay, the whole corporeal mass, all the brute and stupid matter of the universe, must upon these terms be allowed to have life and understanding ; since there is nothing, that we know of, in a state of absolute rest. Those things

things that seem to be at rest upon the surface of the earth, are daily wheeled about its axis, and yearly about the sun with a prodigious swiftness.

IV. But fourthly, they will say, it is not motion in general that can do these feats of sensation and perception; but a particular sort of it in an organized body through the determinate roads and channels of muscles and nerves. But, I pray, among all the kinds of motion, whether straight, or circular, or parabolical, or in what curve they please, what pretence can one make to thinking and liberty of will more than another? Why do not these persons make a diagram of these cogitative lines and angles, and demonstrate their properties of perception and appetite, as plainly as we know the other properties of triangles and circles? But how little can any motion, either circular or other, contribute to the production of thought! No such circular motion of an atom can be all of it existent at once; it must needs be made gradually and successively, both as to place and time; for body cannot at the same instant be in more places than one. So that at any instant of time the moving atom is but in one single point of the line. Therefore all its motion, but in that one point, is either future or past; and no other parts are co-existent or contemporary with it. Now what
is

is not present, is nothing at all, and can be the efficient of nothing. If motion then be the cause of thought, thought must be produced by one single point of motion, a point with relation to time as well as to place. And such a point to our conceptions is almost equivalent to permanency and rest, or at least to any other point of any motion whatsoever. What then is become of the privilege of that organical motion of the animal spirits above any other? Again, we have shewn, that this circular and other motion is but the successive flux of an atom, and is never existent together; and indeed is a pure *ens rationis*, an operation of the soul, which, considering past motion and future, and recollecting the whole by the memory and fancy, calls this by one denomination, and that by another. How then can that motion be the efficient of thought, which is evidently the effect and the product of it?

V. But fifthly, they will say farther, (which is their last refuge,) that it is not motion alone, or under this or that denomination, that produceth cogitation; but when it falls out that numerous particles of matter, aptly disposed and directed, do interfere in their motions, and strike and knock one another; this is it which begets our sensation. All the active power and vigour of the mind, our faculties of reason, imagination, and will, are the wonderful result
of

of this mutual occurre, this pulsion and repercussion of atoms: just as we experience it in the flint and the steel; you may move them apart as long as you please, to very little purpose; but it is the hitting and collision of them, that must make them strike fire. You may remember I have proved before, that light and heat, and the rest of those qualities, are not such ideas in the bodies as we perceive in ourselves: so that this smiting of the steel with the flint doth only make a comminution, and a very rapid whirling and melting of some particles; but that idea of flame is wholly in us. But what a strange and miraculous thing should we count it, if the flint and the steel, instead of a few sparks, should chance to strike out definitions and syllogisms? and yet it is altogether as reasonable as this sottish opinion of the Atheists, that dead senseless atoms can ever juggle and knock one another into life and understanding. All that can be effected by such encounters of atoms, is either the imparting or receiving of motion, or a new determination and direction of its course. Matter, when it acts upon matter, can communicate nothing but motion; and that we have shewed before to be utterly unable to produce those sensations. And again, how can that concussion of atoms be capable of begetting those internal and vital affections, that self-consciousness

ness and those other powers and energies that we feel in our minds? seeing they only strike upon the outward surfaces, they cannot inwardly pervade one another; they cannot have any penetration of dimensions and conjunction of substance. But, it may be, these atoms of theirs may have sense and perception in them, but they are refractory and fullen; and therefore, like men of the same tempers, must be banged and buffeted into reason. And indeed that way of argumentation would be most proper and effectual upon these atheistical Atomists themselves. It is a vigorous execution of good laws, and not rational discourses only, either neglected or not understood, that must reclaim the profaneness of those perverse and unreasonable men. For what can be said more to such persons, that are either so disingenuous or so stupid, as to profess to believe, that all the natural powers and acquired habits of the mind, that penetrating understanding and accurate judgment, that strength of memory and readiness of wit, that liberality and justice and prudence and magnanimity, that charity and beneficence to mankind, that ingenuous fear and awful love of God, that comprehensive knowledge of the histories and languages of so many nations, that experienced insight into the works and wonders of nature, that rich vein of poetry and inexhausted fountain

tain of eloquence, those lofty flights of thought and almost intuitive perceptions of abstruse notions, those exalted discoveries of mathematical theorems and divine contemplations, all the admirable endowments and capacities of human nature, which we sometimes see actually existent in one and the same person, can proceed from the blind shuffling and casual clashing of atoms. I could as easily take up with that senseless assertion of the [†]Stoics, that virtues and vices, and sciences and arts, and fancies and passions, and appetites, are all of them real bodies and distinct animals, as with this of the Atheist, that they can all be derived from the power of mere bodies. It is utterly incredible and impossible; and we cannot without indignation go about to refute such an absurd imagination, such a gross contradiction to unprejudiced reason. And yet, if the Atheists had not been driven from all their posts and their subterfuges; if we had not pursued their atoms through all their turnings and windings, their cells and recesses, their interferences and jostlings, they would boast that they could not be answered; and make a mighty flutter and triumph.

Nay, though they are so miserably confounded and baffled, and can offer no further

[†] Seneca, Ep. 113. Plutarch. de Contrad. Stoic.

explication

explication of the cause and the manner ; yet they will, sixthly, urge matter of fact and experience, that mere body may produce cogitation and sense. For, say they, do but observe the actions of some brutes, how nearly they approach to human reason, and visibly discover some glimpses of understanding : and if that be performed by the pure mechanism of their bodies, (as many do allow, who yet believe the being of God, and an immaterial spirit in man,) then it is but raising our conceptions, and supposing mankind to be engines of a finer make and contexture, and the business is done. I must confess that the Cartesians and some others, men that have given no occasion to be suspected of irreligion, have asserted that brutes are mere *machines* and *automata*. I cannot now engage in the controversy, neither is there any necessity to do so ; for religion is not endangered by either opinion. If brutes be said to have sense and immaterial souls, what need we be concerned, whether those souls shall be immortal, or annihilated at the time of death ? This objection supposes the being of God ; and he will do all things for the wisest and best ends. Or, if brutes be supposed to be bare engines and machines, I admire and adore the divine artifice and skill in such a wonderful contrivance. But I shall deny then that they have any reason or sense,

sense, if they be nothing but matter. Omnipotence itself cannot create cogitative body. And it is not any imperfection in the power of God, but an incapacity in the subject. The ideas of matter and thought are absolutely incompatible ; and this the Cartesians themselves do allow. Do but convince them that brutes have the least participation of thought, or will, or appetite, or sensation, or fancy, and they will readily retract their opinion. For none but besotted Atheists do join the two notions together, and believe brutes to be rational or sensitive machines. They are either the one, or the other ; either endued with sense and some glimmering rays of reason from a higher principle than matter ; or (as the Cartesians say) they are purely body, void of all sensation and life ; and, like the idols of the Gentiles, *they have eyes, and see not ; ears, and hear not ; noses, and smell not* : they eat without hunger, and drink without thirst, and howl without pain. They perform the outward material actions, but they have no inward self-consciousness, nor any more perception of what they do or suffer, than a looking-glass has of the objects it reflects, or the index of a watch of the hour it points to. And as one of those watches, when it was first presented to the Emperor of China, was taken there for an animal ; so, on the contrary, our Cartesians take

take brute animals for a sort of watches. For, considering the infinite distance betwixt the poor mortal artist, and the almighty Opificer; the few wheels and motions of a watch, and the innumerable springs and organs in the bodies of brutes; they may affirm, (as they think, without either absurdity or impiety,) that they are nothing but moving *automata*, as the fabulous statues of Dædalus, bereaved of all true life and vital sensation, which never act spontaneously and freely: but as watches must be wound up to set them agoing, so their motions also are excited and inhibited, are moderated and managed by the objects without them.

(2.) And now that I have gone through the six parts that I proposed, and sufficiently shewn that sense and perception can never be the product of any kind of matter and motion, it remains therefore that it must necessarily proceed from some incorporeal substance within us. And though we cannot conceive the manner of the soul's action and passion, nor what hold it can lay on the body when it voluntarily moves it, yet we are as certain that it doth so, as of any mathematical truth what-

* Vide Zenobium et Suidam in Δαιδάλεω αὐτῶματα, et Scholiastem Eurip. Hecubæ, ver. 838.

foever; or at least of such as are proved from the impossibility or absurdity of the contrary, a way of proof that is allowed for infallible demonstration. Why one motion of the body begets an idea of pleasure in the mind, another an idea of pain; why such a disposition of the body induces sleep, another disturbs all the operations of the soul, and occasions a lethargy or frenzy; this knowledge exceeds our narrow faculties, and is out of the reach of our discovery. I discern some excellent final causes of such a vital conjunction of body and soul; but the instrumental I know not, nor what invisible bands and fetters unite them together. I resolve all that into the sole pleasure and *fiat* of our omnipotent Creator; whose existence (which is my last point) is so plainly and nearly deducible from the established proof of an immaterial soul, that no wonder the resolved Atheists do so labour and bestir themselves to fetch sense and perception out of the power of matter. I will dispatch it in three words. For, since we have shewn that there is an incorporeal substance within us, whence did that proceed, and how came it into being? It did not exist from all eternity; that is too absurd to be supposed; nor could it come out of nothing into being without an efficient cause. Something therefore must have created our souls out of nothing; and that something

something (since nothing can give more than it has) must itself have all the perfections that it hath given to them: There is therefore an immaterial and intelligent Being that created our souls; which Being was either eternal itself, or created immediately or ultimately by some other Eternal, that has all those perfections. There is therefore originally *an eternal, immaterial, intelligent Creator*; all which together are the *attributes of God alone*.

And now that I have finished all the parts which I proposed to discourse of, I will conclude all with a short application to the Atheists. And I would advise them, as a friend, to leave off this dabbling and smattering in philosophy, this shuffling and cutting with atoms. It never succeeded well with them, and they always come off with the loss. Their old master Epicurus seems to have had his brains so muddled and confounded with them, that he scarce ever kept in the right way; though the main maxim of his philosophy was to trust to his senses, and follow his nose. ^b I will not take notice of his doting conceit, that the Sun and Moon are no bigger than they appear to the eye, a foot or half a yard over; and that the stars are no larger than so many glow-worms. But let us see how he manages his

^b Epicurus apud Laert. Lucret. lib. v. Cicero de Fin. lib. i. Acad. lib. ii.

atoms, those almighty tools that do every thing of themselves without the help of a workman. When the atoms, says he, ⁱ *descend* in infinite space, (very ingeniously spoken, to make high and low in infinity,) they do not fall plump down, but decline a little from the perpendicular, either obliquely or in a curve : and this declination, says he, from the direct line is the cause of our liberty of will. But, I say, this declination of atoms in their descent was itself either necessary or voluntary. If it was necessary, how then could that necessity ever beget liberty ? If it was voluntary, then atoms had that power of volition before : and what becomes then of the Epicurean doctrine of the fortuitous production of worlds ? The whole business is contradiction, and ridiculous nonsense. It is as if one should say, that a bowl equally poized, and thrown upon a plain and smooth bowling-green, will run necessarily and fatally in a direct motion ; but if it be made with a bias, that may decline it a little from a straight line, it may acquire by that motion a liberty of will, and so run spontaneously to the jack. It would behove the Atheists to give over such trifling as this, and resume the old solid way of confuting religion. They should deny the being of the soul, be-

ⁱ Lucret. lib. ii. Cicero de Fato, et lib. i. de Nat. Deorum. Plutarch, &c.

cause

cause they cannot see it. This would be an invincible argument against us: for we can never exhibit it to their touch, nor expose it to their view; nor shew them the colour and complexion of a soul. They should dispute, as a bold brother of theirs did; that he was sure there was no God, because, says he, if there was one, he would have struck me to hell with thunder and lightning, that have so reviled and blasphemed him. This would be an objection indeed. Alas, all that we could answer is in the next words to the text, *That God hath appointed a day in which he will judge all the world in righteousness*, and that *the goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering of God*, which are some of his attributes, and essential perfections *of his being*, ought not to be abused and perverted into arguments *against his being*. But, if this will not do, we must yield ourselves overcome: for we neither can nor desire to *command fire to come down from heaven and consume them*, and give them such experimental conviction of the existence of God. So that they ought to take these methods, if they would successfully attack religion. But if they will still be meddling with atoms, be hammering and squeezing understanding out of them, I would advise them to make use of their own understanding for the instance. Nothing, in my opinion, could run us down more effectually

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than

than that; for we readily allow, that if any understanding can possibly be produced by such clashing of senseless atoms, it is that of an Atheist, that hath the fairest pretensions and the best title to it. We know, it is *the fool that hath said in his heart, There is no God*. And it is no less a truth than a paradox, that there are no greater *fools* than atheistical *wits*; and none so *credulous* as *infidels*. No article of religion, though as demonstrable as the nature of the thing can admit, hath credibility enough for them. And yet these same cautious and quick-sighted gentlemen can wink and swallow down this sottish opinion about percipient atoms, which exceeds in incredibility all the fictions of Æsop's fables. For is it not every whit as likely or more, that cocks and bulls might discourse, and hinds and panthers hold conferences about religion, as that atoms can do so? that atoms can invent arts and sciences, can institute society and government, can make leagues and confederacies, can devise methods of peace and stratagems of war? And, moreover, the modesty of mythology deserves to be commended; the scenes there are laid at a distance: it is once upon a time, in the days of yore, and in the land of Utopia, there was a dialogue between an oak and a cedar: whereas the Atheist is so impudently silly, as to bring the farce of his atoms upon

upon the theatre of the present age ; to make dull senseless matter tranfact all public and private affairs, by sea and by land, in houses of parliament, and closets of princes. Can any credulity be comparable to this ? If a man should affirm, that an ape, casually meeting with pen, ink, and paper, and falling to scribble, did happen to write exactly the Leviathan of Thomas Hobbes, would an Atheist believe such a story ? And yet he can easily digest as incredible as that ; that the innumerable members of a human body, which, in the style of the Scripture, ^k *are all written in the book of God*, and may admit of almost infinite variations and transpositions above the twenty-four letters of the alphabet, were at first fortuitously scribbled, and by mere accident compacted into this beautiful, and noble, and most wonderfully useful frame, which we now see it carry. But this will be the argument of my next discourse, which is the second proposition drawn from the text, that the admirable structure of human bodies, whereby they are fitted to live, and move, and be vitally informed by the soul, is unquestionably the workmanship of a most wise and powerful and beneficent Maker : *to which Almighty Creator, together with the Son and the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory and majesty and power, both now and from henceforth evermore. Amen.*

^k Psal. cxxxix. 16.

A CONFUTATION OF ATHEISM

FROM THE

STRUCTURE AND ORIGIN OF HUMAN BODIES.

PART I.

SERMON III.

Preached May the 2d, 1692.

ACTS xvii. 27, 28.

That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him; though he be not far from every one of us: for in him we live, and move, and have our being.

I HAVE said enough in my last to shew the fitness and pertinency of the Apostle's discourse to the persons he addressed to; whereby it sufficiently appears that he was no *babbler*, as some of the Athenian rabble reproached him; not a *σπερμολόγος*, a busy prating fellow; as in another language they say, *a sermones serere* and *rumores serere*, in a like mode of expression;

* Plautus, Virgil. Livius.

that

that he did not talk at random, but was thoroughly acquainted with the several humours and opinions of his auditors. And, as *Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians*, so it is manifest from this chapter alone, if nothing else had been now extant, that St. Paul was a great master in all the learning of the Greeks. One thing further I shall observe from the words of the text, before I enter upon the subject which I proposed; that it requires some industry and consideration to find out the being of God; we must *seek the Lord*, and *feel after him*, before we can *find* him by the light of nature. The search indeed is not very tedious nor difficult; *he is not far from every one of us: for in him we live, and move, and have our being*. The consideration of our mind and understanding, which is an incorporeal substance independent from matter; and the contemplation of our own bodies, which have all the stamps and characters of excellent contrivance; these alone, though we look upon nothing abroad, do very easily and proximately guide us to the wise Author of all things. But however, as we see in our text, some thoughts and meditation are necessary to it; and a man may possibly be so stupid, or wilfully ignorant or perverse, as not to have *God in all his thoughts*, or to *say in his heart, There is none*.

And

And this being observed, we have an effectual answer to that cavil of the Atheists, who make it an objection against the being of God, that they do not discover him without any application, in spite of their corrupt wills and debauched understandings. If, say they, such a God, as we are told of, had created and formed us, surely he would have left upon our minds a native and indelible inscription of himself, whereby we must needs have *felt* him, even without *seeking*, and believed in him whether we would or no. So that these Atheists, being conscious to themselves that they are void of such belief, which, they say, if God was, would actually and necessarily be in them, do bring their own wicked doubting and denying of God as evidence against his existence; and make their very infidelity an argument for itself. To which we reply, that God hath endowed mankind with powers and abilities, which we call natural light, and reason, and common sense; by the due use of which we cannot miss of the discovery of his being; and this is sufficient. But, as to that original notion and proposition, God is, which the Atheist pretends should have been actually imprinted on us, antecedently to all use of our faculties; we may affirm, that the absence of such a notion doth not give the least presumption against the truth of religion; because, though
God

God be supposed to be, yet that notion distinct from our faculties would not be requisite; nor is it asserted by religion. *First*, it would not be requisite; because, without any such primitive impression, we can easily attain to the knowledge of the Deity by the sole use of our natural reason. And again, such an impression would have rendered the belief of a God irresistible and necessary, and thereby have bereaved it of all that is good and acceptable in it. For as the taking away the freedom of human will, and making us mere machines under fatal ties and impulses, would destroy the very nature of moral virtue; so likewise, as to faith, there would be nothing worthy of praise and recompense in it, if there were left no possibility of doubting and denying. And *secondly*, such a radical truth, God is, springing up together with the essence of the soul, and previous to all other thoughts, is not asserted by religion. No such thing, that I know of, is affirmed or suggested by the Scriptures. There are several topics there used against the atheism and idolatry of the Heathens; such as the visible marks of divine wisdom and goodness in the works of the creation, the vital union of souls with matter, and the admirable structure of animate bodies, and the like: but, if our Apostle had asserted such an anticipating principle engraven upon
our

our souls before all exercise of reason, what did he talk of *seeking the Lord*, if haply they might feel after him, and find him? since, if the knowledge of him was in that manner innate and perpetual, there would be no occasion of *seeking*, nor any *hap* or hazard in the finding. Such an inscription would be self-evident without reasoning or study, and could not fail constantly to exert its energy in their minds. What did he talk of the *unknown God*, and *ignorantly worshipping*? when, if such an original signature were always inherent in their hearts, God could not be unknown to, or ignorantly worshipped by any. That primary proposition would have been clear, and distinct, and efficacious, and universal in the minds of men. St. Paul therefore, it appears, had no apprehension of such a first notion, nor made use of it for an argument; which (since whoever hath it, must needs know that he hath it) if it be not believed before by the adversary, is false; and, if it be believed, is superfluous; and is of so frail and brittle a texture, that, whereas other arguments are not answered by bare denying without contrary proof, the mere doubting and disbelieving of this must be granted to be *ipso facto* the breaking and confuting of it. Thus much therefore we have proved against the Atheists; that such an original irresistible notion is neither

ther requisite upon supposition of a Deity, nor is pretended to by religion; so that neither the absence of it is any argument against the being of God, nor a supposed false assertion of it an objection against the Scripture. It is enough that all are furnished with such natural powers and capacities, that if they seriously reflect, if they *seek the Lord* with meditation and study, they cannot fail of *finding* and discovering him: whereby God is not *left without witness*, but the *Atheist without excuse*. And now I haste to the second proposition deduced from the text, and to the argument of the present discourse, that the original structure of human bodies, whereby they are fitted to live, and move, and be vitally informed by the soul, is unquestionably the workmanship of a most wise, and powerful, and beneficent Maker.

First, it is allowed and acknowledged by all parties, that the bodies of men and other animals are excellently well fitted for life, and motion, and sensation; and the several parts of them well adapted and accommodated to their particular functions. The eye is very proper and meet for seeing, the tongue for tasting and speaking, the hand for holding and lifting, and ten thousand operations beside: and so for the inward parts; the lungs are suitable for respiration, the stomach for con-

coction,

coction, the lacteous vessels for the reception of the chyle, the heart for the distribution of the blood to all the parts of the body. This is matter of fact, and beyond all dispute; and in effect is no more than to say, that *animals are animals*; for, if they were deprived of these qualifications, they could not be so. This therefore is not the matter in question between us and the Atheists: but the controversy is here. We, when we consider so many constituent parts in the bodies of men, all admirably compacted into so noble an engine; in each of the very fingers, for example, there are bones, and gristles, and ligaments, and membranes, and muscles, and tendons, and nerves, and arteries, and veins, and skin, and cuticle, and nail; together with marrow, and fat, and blood, and other nutritious juices; and all those solid parts of a determinate size, and figure, and texture, and situation; and each of them made up of myriads of little fibres and filaments, not discoverable by the naked eye; I say, when we consider how innumerable parts must constitute so small a member as the finger, we cannot look upon it or the whole body, wherein appears so much fitness, and use, and subserviency to infinite functions, any otherwise than as the effect of contrivance and skill, and consequently the workmanship of a most intelligent and beneficent

cent Being. And though now the propagation of mankind be in a settled method of nature, which is the instrument of God, yet we affirm that the first production of mankind was by the immediate power of the almighty Author of nature ; and that all succeeding generations of men are the progeny of one primitive couple. This is a religious man's account of the frame and origination of himself. Now the Atheists agree with us, as to the fitness of man's body and its several parts to their various operations and functions, (for that is visible and past all contradiction,) but they vehemently oppose, and horribly dread the thought, that this usefulness of the parts and the whole should first arise from wisdom and design. So that here will be the point in debate, and the subject of our present undertaking ; whether this acknowledged fitness of human bodies must be attributed, as we say, to a wise and good God ; or, as the Atheists aver, to dead senseless matter. They have contrived several tricks and ^b *methods of deceit*, one repugnant to another, to evade, if possible, this most cogent proof of a Deity ; all which I will propose and refute : and I hope to make it appear, that here, as indeed every where, but here certainly, in the great dramatic poem of nature,

^b Μεθοδίας τῆς πλάνης, Eph. iv. 14.

is *dignus Deo vindice nodus*, a necessity of introducing a God.

And first, I will answer what exceptions they can have against our account: and secondly, I will confute all the reasons and explications they can give of their own.

1. *First*, I will answer what exceptions they can have against our account of the production of mankind. And they may object, that the body itself, though pretty good in its kind and upon their hypothesis, nevertheless doth not look like the workmanship of so great a Master as is pretended by us: that infinite Wisdom and Goodness and Power would have bestowed upon us more senses than five, or at least these five in a much higher perfection; that we could never have come out of the hands of the Almighty so subject to numerous diseases, so obnoxious to violent deaths; and, at best, of such a short and transitory life. They can no more ascribe so sorry an effect to an omniscient cause, than some ordinary piece of clock-work with a very few motions and uses, and those continually out of order, and quickly at an end, to the best artist of the age. But to this we reply: *first*, as to the five senses, it would be rash indeed to affirm, that God, if he had pleased, could not have endued us with more. But thus much we may aver, that though the power of God

be infinite and perfect, yet the capacities of matter are within limits and bounds. Why then doth the Atheist suspect that there may possibly be any more ways of sensation than what we have already? Hath he an idea, or notion, or discovery of any more? So far from that, that he cannot make any addition or progress in those very senses he hath, further than they themselves have informed him. He cannot imagine one new colour, or taste, or smell, beside those that have actually fallen under his senses. Much less can he that is destitute of an entire sense, have any idea or representation of it; as one that is born deaf hath no notion of sounds; or blind, of colours and light. If then the Atheist can have no imagination of more senses than five, why doth he suppose that a body is capable of more? If we had double or triple as many, there might still be the same suspicion for a greater number without end; and the objection therefore in both cases is equally unreasonable and groundless. *Secondly*, we affirm, that our senses have that degree of perfection which is most fit and suitable to our estate and condition. For, though the *eye* were so piercing as to descry even opake and little objects some hundreds of leagues off, even that improvement of our sight would do us little service; it would be terminated by neighbouring hills and woods;
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or in the largest and evenest plain by the very convexity of the earth; unless we could always inhabit the tops of mountains and cliffs, or had wings too to fly aloft, when we had a mind to take a prospect. And if mankind had had wings, (as perhaps some extravagant Atheist may think us deficient in that,) all the world must have consented to clip them; or else human race had been extinct before this time, nothing upon that supposition being safe from murder and rapine. Or, if the *eye* were so acute as to rival the finest microscopes, and to discern the smallest hair upon the leg of a gnat, it would be a curse and not a blessing to us; it would make all things appear rugged and deformed; the most finely polished crystal would be uneven and rough; the sight of our own selves would affright us; the smoothest skin would be beset all over with ragged scales, and bristly hairs: and besides, we could not see at one view above what is now the space of an inch, and it would take a considerable time to survey the then mountainous bulk of our own bodies. Such a faculty of sight, so disproportioned to our other senses and to the objects about us, would be very little better than blindness itself. And again, God hath furnished us with invention and industry, so that by optical glasses we can more than supply that imaginary defect of our

own eyes, and discover more remote and minute bodies with that assistance, than perhaps the most whimsical Atheist would desire to do without it. So likewise if our sense of *hearing* were exalted proportionally to the former, what a miserable condition would mankind be in ! What whisper could be low enough, but many would overhear it ? What affairs, that most require it, could be transacted with secrecy ? And whither could we retire from perpetual humming and buzzing ? Every breath of wind would incommode and disturb us : we should have no quiet or sleep in the silentest nights and most solitary places ; and we must inevitably be struck deaf or dead with the noise of a clap of thunder. And the like inconveniences would follow if the sense of *feeling* was advanced to such a degree as the Atheist requires. How could we sustain the pressure of our very clothes in such a condition ; much less carry burdens, and provide for conveniences of life ? We could not bear the assault of an insect, or a feather, or a puff of air without pain. There are examples now of wounded persons, that have roared for anguish and torment at the discharge of ordnance, though at a very great distance : what insupportable torture then should we be under upon a like concussion in the air, when all the whole body would have the tenderness of a wound !

wound ! In a word, all the changes and emendations that the Atheists would make in our senses, are so far from being improvements, that they would prove the utter ruin and extirpation of mankind.

But perhaps they may have better success in their complaints about the distempers of the body, and the shortness of life. We do not wonder indeed that the Atheist should lay a mighty stress upon this objection : for, to a man that places all his happiness in the indolency and pleasure of body, what can be more terrible than pain, or a fit of sickness ? nothing but death alone, the most dreadful thing in the world. When an Atheist reflects upon death, his very hope is despair ; and it is the crown and top of his wishes, that it may prove his utter dissolution and destruction. No question, if an Atheist had had the making of himself, he would have framed a constitution that could have kept pace with his insatiable lust, been invincible by gluttony and intemperance, and have held out vigorous a thousand years in a perpetual debauch. But we answer ; first, in the words of St. Paul : *“ Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God ? shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus ?* We do adore

^c Rom. ix. 20.

and magnify his most holy name for his undeserved mercy towards us, that he made us the chief of the visible creation ; and freely acquit his goodness from any imputation of unkindness, that he has placed us no higher. Secondly, religion gives us a very good account of the present infirmity of our bodies. Man at his first origin was a vessel of honour, when he came first out of the hands of the potter, endued with all imaginable perfections of the animal nature, till by disobedience and sin diseases and death came first into the world. Thirdly, the distempers of the body are not so formidable to a religious man as they are to an Atheist : he hath a quite different judgment and apprehension about them ; he is willing to believe, that our present condition is better for us in the issue, than that uninterrupted health and security that the Atheist desires ; which would strongly tempt us to forget God, and the concerns of a better life. Whereas now he receives a fit of sickness, as the *παιδεία τῆ πατρὸς*, the kind chastisement and discipline of his heavenly father, to wean his affections from the world, where he is but as on a journey ; and to fix his thoughts and desires on things above, where his country and his dwelling is : that, where he hath placed his *treasure* and concerns, *there his heart may be also*. Fourthly, most of the distempers that are
incident

incident to us are of our own making, the effects of abused plenty, and luxury, and must not be charged upon our Maker ; who out of the abundant riches of his compassion hath provided for us a store of excellent medicines, to alleviate in a great measure those very evils which we bring upon ourselves. And now we are come to the last objection of the Atheist, that life is too short. Alas for him, what pity it is that he cannot wallow immortally in his sensual pleasures ! But, if his life were many whole ages longer than it is, he would still make the same complaint, ^d *brevis est hic fructus homullis* ; for eternity, and that is the thing he trembles at, is every whit as long, after a thousand years as after fifty. But religion gives us a better prospect, and makes us look beyond the gloomy regions of death with comfort and delight : *when this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal put on immortality*, we are so far from repining at God that he hath not extended the period of our lives to the longevity of the antediluvians, that we give him thanks for contracting the days of our trial, and receiving us more maturely into those everlasting habitations above, that he hath prepared for us.

And now that I have answered all the Athe-

^d Lucret. lib. iii.

ists' exceptions against our account of the production of mankind, I come in the next place to examine all the reasons and explications they can give of their own.

The Atheists upon this occasion are divided into sects, and (which is the mark and character of error) are at variance and repugnancy with each other and with themselves. Some of them will have mankind to have been thus from all eternity. But the rest do not approve of infinite successions, but are positive for a beginning; and they also are subdivided into three parties: the first ascribe the origin of men to the influence of the stars upon some extraordinary conjunction or aspect: others again reject all astrology; and some of these mechanically produce mankind, at the very first experiment, by the action of the Sun upon duly prepared matter: but others are of opinion, that after infinite blundering and miscarrying, our bodies at last came into this figure by mere chance and accident. There is no Atheist in the world, that reasons about his infidelity, (which, God knows, most of them never do,) but he takes one of these four methods. I will refute them every one in the same order that I have named them: the two former in the present discourse, reserving the others for another occasion.

I. And

I. And first, the opinion of those Atheists, that will have mankind and other animals to have subsisted eternally in infinite generations already past, will be found to be flat nonsense and contradiction to itself, and repugnant also to matter of fact. First, it is contradiction to itself. Infinite generations of men, they say, are already past and gone. But whatsoever is now past, was once actually present; so that each of those infinite generations was once in its turn actually present: therefore all except one generation were once future and not in being, which destroys the very supposition: for either that one generation must itself have been infinite, which is nonsense; or it was the finite beginning of infinite generations between itself and us, that is infinity terminated at both ends, which is nonsense as before. Again, infinite past generations of men have been once actually present: there may be some one man suppose then, that was at infinite distance from us now; therefore that man's son likewise, forty years younger suppose than his father, was either at infinite distance from us, or at finite: if that son too was at infinite distance from us, then one infinite is longer by forty years than another; which is absurd: if at finite, then forty years added to finite makes it infinite, which is as absurd as the other. And again, the number
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of men that are already dead and gone is infinite, as they say : but the number of the eyes of those men must necessarily be twice as much as that of the men themselves, and that of the fingers ten times as much, and that of the hairs of their heads thousands of times. So that we have here one infinite number twice, ten times, and thousands of times as great as another, which is contradiction again. Thus we see it is impossible in itself that any successive duration should be actually and positively infinite, or have infinite successions already gone and past. Neither can these difficulties be applied to the eternal duration of God Almighty. For, though we cannot comprehend eternity and infinity, yet we understand what they are not. And something, we are sure, must have existed from all eternity ; because all things could not emerge and start out of nothing. So that if this preexistent eternity is not compatible with a successive duration, as we clearly and distinctly perceive that it is not ; then it remains, that some Being, though infinitely above our finite comprehensions, must have an identical, invariable continuance from all eternity ; which Being is no other than God. For, as his nature is perfect and immutable without the *least shadow of change*, so his eternal duration is permanent and indivisible, not measurable by time and motion,

motion, nor to be computed by number of successive moments: *one day with the Lord is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.*

And, secondly, this opinion of infinite generation is repugnant likewise to matter of fact. It is a truth beyond opposition, that the universal species of mankind hath had a gradual increase, notwithstanding what war, and famine, and pestilence, and floods, and conflagrations, and the religious profession of celibacy, and other causes, may at certain periods of time have interrupted and retarded it. This is manifest from the history of the Jewish nation, from the account of the Roman census, and registers of our own country, where the proportions of births to burials is found upon observation to be yearly as fifty to forty. Now if mankind do increase, though never so slowly, but one couple suppose in an age, it is enough to evince the falsehood of infinite generations already expired. For though an Atheist should contend, that there were ten thousand million couple of mankind now in being, (that we may allow him multitude enough,) it is but going back so many ages, and we descend to a single original pair. And it is all one in respect of eternal duration yet behind, whether

• • Vide Observations upon the Bills of Mortality.

we begin the world so many millions of ages ago, or date it from the late æra of about six thousand years. And moreover this recent beginning of the world is further established from the known original of empires and kingdoms, and the invention of arts and sciences : whereas, if infinite ages of mankind had already preceded, there could nothing have been left to be invented or improved by the successful industry and curiosity of our own. The circulation of the blood, and the weight and spring of the air, (which is as it were the vital pulse and the great circulation of nature, and of more importance in all physiology than any one invention since the beginning of science,) had never lain hid so many myriads of generations, and been reserved for a late happy discovery by two great luminaries of this island. I know the Atheist may endeavour to evade this by supposing, that, though mankind have been from everlasting, and have perpetually increased by generation, yet at certain great periods there may be universal deluges, which may not wholly extinguish mankind, (for, they will say, there is not water enough in nature for that,) but may cover the earth to such a height, that none but a few mountaineers may escape, enough to continue human race ; and yet, being illiterate rustics, (as mountaineers always are,) they can preserve no memoirs of
former

former times, nor propagate any sciences or arts; and so the world must needs be thought by posterity to have begun at such periods. But to this I answer, first, that upon this supposition there must have been infinite deluges already past: for if ever this Atheist admits of a first deluge, he is in the same noose that he was. For then he must assert, that there were infinite generations and an infinite increase of mankind before that first deluge; and then the earth could not receive them, but the infinite bodies of men must occupy an infinite space, and then all the matter of the universe must be human body: and many other absurdities will follow, absurdities as infinite as the generations he talks of. But, if he says, that there have been infinite deluges heretofore, this is impossibility again; for all that I said before against the notion of infinite past generations, is alike applicable to this. Secondly, such universal deluges (since the Deity is now excluded) must be produced in a natural way; and therefore gradually, and not in an instant; and therefore (because the tops of mountains, they say, are never overflown) the civilized people may escape thither out of villages and cities; and consequently, against the Atheist, arts, and sciences, and histories, may be preserved, and derived to the succeeding world. Thirdly, let us imagine the whole terraqueous globe.

globe with its atmosphere about it; what is there here that can naturally effect an universal deluge? If you would drown one country or continent with rains and inundations, you must borrow your vapour and water from some other part of the globe. You can never overflow all at a time. If the atmosphere itself was reduced into water, as some think it possible, it would not make an orb above thirty-two foot deep, which would soon be swallowed up by the cavity of the sea, and the depressed parts of the earth, and be a very feeble attempt towards an universal deluge. But then what immense weight is there above, that must overcome the expansive force of the air, and compress it into near the thousandth part of the room that it now takes up? We, that acknowledge a God Almighty, can give an account of one deluge, by saying it was miraculous; but it would be strange to see an Atheist have recourse to a miracle; and that not once only, but upon infinite occasions. But perhaps they may endeavour to prove the possibility of such a natural deluge by borrowing an ingenious notion, and pretending, that the face of nature may be now quite changed from what it was; and that formerly the whole collection of waters might be an orbicular abyss, arched over with an exterior crust or shell of earth, and that the breaking and fall
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of this crust might naturally make a deluge. I will allow the Atheist all the fair play in the world. Let us suppose the fall of this imaginary crust. First, it seems to be impossible but that all the inhabitants of this crust must be dashed to pieces in its ruins : so that this very notion brings us to the necessity of a new production of men ; to evade which it is introduced by the Atheist. Again, if such a crust naturally fell, then it had in its own constitution a tendency towards a fall ; that is, it was more likely and inclinable to fall this thousand years, than the last. But, if the crust was always gradually nearer and nearer to falling ; that plainly evinces, that it had not endured eternally before its fall. For, let them assign any imaginable period for its falling, how could it have held out till then (according to the supposition) the unmeasurable duration of infinite ages before ? And again, such a crust could fall but once ; for what architect can an Atheist suppose to rebuild a new arch out of the ruins of the other ? But I have shewn before that this Atheist hath need of infinite deluges to effect his design ; and therefore I will leave him to contrive how to make infinite crusts one upon the back of another, and now proceed to examine, in the second place, the astrological explication of the origin of men.

II. If

II. If you ask one of this party, what evidence he is able to produce for the truth of his art, he may perhaps offer some physical reasons for a general influence of the stars upon terrestrial bodies: but, as astrology is considered to be a system of rules and propositions, he will not pretend to give any reason of it *ex priori*; but resolves all that into tradition from the Chaldeans and Egyptians, who first learnt it by long observation, and transmitted it down to posterity; and that now it is daily confirmed, by events which are experienced to answer the predictions. This is all that can be said for astrology as an art. So that the whole credibility of this planetary production of mankind must depend upon observation. But are they able to shew among all the Chaldaic observations for four hundred and seventy thousand years (as they pretended) any tradition of such a production? So far from that, that the Chaldeans believed the world and mankind to have been from everlasting, which opinion I have refuted before. Neither can the Egyptian wizards with their long catalogue of dynasties, and observations for innumerable years, supply the Atheists with one instance of such a creation. Where are the fragments of Ptolemy and Necepsus, that may countenance this assertion? I believe, if they had had any example of men born out of the soil, they would rather

rather have ascribed it to the fruitful mud of the Nile (as they did the breeding of frogs, and mice, and monsters) than to the efficacy of stars. But, with the leave of these fortune-tellers, did the stars do this feat once only, which gave beginning to human race? or have they frequently done so, and may do it again? If frequently, why is not this rule delivered in Ptolemy and Albumazar? If once only, at the beginning, then how came it to be discovered? Who were there then in the world to observe the births of those first men, and calculate their nativities, as they sprawled out of ditches? Those sons of earth were very wise children, if they themselves knew that the stars were their fathers: unless we are to imagine that they understood the planets and the zodiac by instinct, and fell to drawing schemes of their own horoscopes in the same dust they sprung out of? § For my part, I can have no great veneration for Chaldaic antiquity, when I see they could not discover in so many thousand years that the Moon was

† So Diodorus Siculus, lib. i. cap. 2. *Φασὶ τοῖσι Αἰγυπτίοις κατὰ τὴν ἐξ ἀρχῆς τῶν ὄλων γίνεσθαι πρώτους τὰς ἀνθρώπους γενέσθαι κατὰ τὴν Αἴγυπτον, διὰ τε τὴν εὐκλείαν τῆς χώρας, καὶ διὰ τὴν φύσιν τοῦ Νείλου, &c.*

§ Vitruvius, lib. ix. cap. 4. Lucret. lib. v. *Ut Babylonica Chaldaeam doctrina &c.* Apuleius de Deo Socratis: *Seu illa (Luna) proprio et perpeti fulgore, ut Chaldaei arbitrantur, parte luminis compos, parte altera casta fulgoris.*

an opaque body, and received her light from the Sun. But, suppose their observations had been never so accurate, it could add no authority to modern astrology, which is borrowed from the Greeks. It is well known that Berosus, or his scholars, new modelled and adapted the Babylonian doctrines to the Grecian mythology. The supposed influences of Aries and Taurus, for example, have a manifest relation to the Grecian stories of the ram that carried Phrixus, and the bull that carried Europa. Now which of these is the copy, and which the original? Were the fables taken from the influences, or the influences from the fables? the poetical fables more ancient than all records of history; or the astrological influences, that were not known to the Greeks till after Alexander the Great? But, without question, those fabulous tales had been many a time told and sung to lull children asleep, before ever Berosus set up his intelligence-office at Cos. And the same may be said of all the other constellations. First, poetry had filled the skies with asterisms and histories belonging to them; and then astrology devises the feigned virtues and influences of each, from some property of the image, or allusion to the story. And the same trifling futility appears in their twelve signs of the zodiac, and their mutual relations and aspects.

Why

Why no more aspects than diametrically opposite, and such as make equilateral figures? Why are the masculine and feminine, the fiery and airy, and watery and earthly signs all placed at such regular distances? Were the virtues of the stars disposed in that order and rank on purpose only to make a pretty diagram upon paper? But the atheistical astrologer is doubly pressed with this absurdity. For, if there was no counsel at the making of the world, how came the asterisms of the same nature and energies to be so harmoniously placed at regular intervals? and how could all the stars of one asterism agree and conspire together to constitute an universal? Why does not every single star shed a separate influence; and have aspects with other stars of their own constellation? But what need there many words? as if the late discoveries of the celestial bodies had not plainly detected the imposture of astrology? The planet Saturn is found to have a great ring that encircles him, and five lesser planets that move about him, as the Moon doth about the earth: and Jupiter hath four satellites, which by their interposition between him and us make some hundreds of eclipses every year. Now the whole tribe of astrologers, that never dreamed of these planets, have always declared, that when Jupiter and Saturn come about again to any given point, they exert

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(considered singly by themselves) the same influence as before. But it is now manifest, that when either of them return to the same point, the planets about them, that must make up an united influence with them, have a different situation in respect of us and each other from what they had the time before; and consequently the joint influence must be perpetually varied, and never be reducible to any rules and observations. Or, if the influences be conveyed hither distinct, yet sometimes some of the little planets will eclipse the great one at any given point; and by that means intercept and obstruct the influence. I cannot now insist on many other arguments deducible from the late improvements of astronomy, and the truth of the Copernican system; for, if the earth be not the centre of the planetary motions, what must become then of the present astrology, which is wholly adapted to that vulgar hypothesis? And yet nevertheless, when they lay under such wretched mistakes for many myriads of years, if we are willing to believe them, they would all along, as now, appeal to experience and event for the confirmation of their doctrines. That is the invincible demonstration of the verity of the science. And indeed, as to their predictions, I think our astrologers may assume to themselves that infallible oracle of Tiresias,

O Lacer-

O Laertiade, quicquid dico, aut erit, aut non.

There is but a true and a false in any telling of fortune ; and a man that never hits on the right side, cannot be called a bad gueffer, but must miss out of design, and be notably skilful at lighting on the wrong. And were there not formerly as great pretensions to it from the superstitious observation of the entrails of cows, of the flying of vultures, and the pecking of chickens ? Nay, the old augurs and soothsayers had better reason to profess the art of divining, than the modern astrological Atheist ; for they supposed there were some dæmons, that directed the indications. So likewise the Chaldean and Egyptian astrologers were much more excusable than he. It was the religion of their countries to worship the stars, as we know from unquestionable authority. ^hThey believed them intelligent beings, and no other than very Gods ; and therefore had some reason to suspect that they might govern human affairs. The influence of the stars was in their apprehensions no less than divine power. But an Atheist, that believes the planets to be dark, solid, and senseless bodies, like the brute earth he treads on ;

^h Maimonides More Nevochim de Zabib et Chaldæis. Plato in Cratylus. Diodorus, lib. i. cap. 2. Eusebius Demonstr. Evangel. lib. i. c. 6. Φοίνικας τοιγαροῦν καὶ Αἰγυπτίους πρώτους ἀπάντων μετέχει λόγος ἥλιον καὶ σελήνην καὶ ἄστρας Θεῶν ἀποφῆναι.

and the fixed stars and the Sun to be inanimate balls of fire ; what reasons can he advance for the credit of such influences ? he acknowledgeth nothing besides matter and motion ; so that all, that he can conceive to be transmitted hither from the stars, must needs be performed either by mechanism or accident ; either of which is wholly unaccountable, and the latter irreconcilable to any art or system of science. But, if both were allowed the Atheist, yet, as to any production of mankind, they will be again refuted in my following discourse. I can preserve a due esteem for some great men of the last age, before the mechanical philosophy was revived, though they were too much addicted to this nugatory art. When occult quality, and sympathy and antipathy, were admitted for satisfactory explications of things, even wise and virtuous men might swallow down any opinion that was countenanced by antiquity. But, at this time of day, when all the general powers and capacities of matter are so clearly understood, he must be very ridiculous himself that doth not deride and explode the antiquated folly. But we may see the miserable shifts that some men are put to, when that which was first founded upon, and afterward supported by idolatry, is now become the tottering sanctuary of Atheism : if the stars be no deities, astrology is ground-

groundless: and if the stars be deities, why is the astrologer an Atheist? He may easily be no Christian; and it is difficult indeed to be both at once: because, as I have said before, idolatry is at the bottom; and, by submitting human actions and inclinations to the influence of the stars, they destroy the very essence of moral virtue and the efficacy of divine grace: and therefore astrology was justly condemned by the ¹ancient Fathers and Christian Emperors. An astrologer, I say, may very easily be no Christian; he may be an idolater or a pagan: but I could hardly think astrology to be compatible with rank atheism, if I could suppose any great gifts of nature to be in that person who is either an Atheist or an astrologer. But, let him be what he will, he is not able to do much hurt by his reasons and example; for religion itself, according to his principles, is derived from the stars. And he owns, it is not any just exceptions he hath taken against it, but it is his destiny and fate: it is Saturn in the ninth house, and not judgment and deliberation, that made him an Atheist.

¹ Concil. Laod. Can. 36. Conc. 6. in Trullo. Can. 61. Cod. Just. lib. ix. tit. 18. Cod. Theodof. lib. ix. tit. 16. *Βασίλειον*, lib. ix. tit. 39.

A CONFUTATION OF ATHEISM

FROM THE

STRUCTURE AND ORIGIN OF HUMAN BODIES.

PART II.

SERMON IV.

Preached June the 6th, 1692.

ACTS xvii. 27, 28.

That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him; though he be not far from every one of us: for in him we live, and move, and have our being.

IN the former part of this enquiry I have examined and refuted two atheistical notions opposed to the great doctrine of the text, *that we owe our living and being to the power of God*: the one of the Aristotelian Atheists, who, to avoid the difficulties of the first production of mankind without the intervention of almighty wisdom and power, will have the race to have thus continued without beginning, by an eternal succession of infinite
past

past generations; which assertion hath been detected to be mere nonsense, and contradictory to itself: the other of the astrological undertakers, that would raise men like vegetables out of some flat and slimy soil well digested by the kindly heat of the Sun, and impregnated with the influence of the stars upon some remarkable and periodical conjunctions: which opinion hath been vamped up of late by Cardan and Cefalpinus, and other newfongers from the skies: a pretence as groundless and silly, as the dreaming oneirocritics of Artemidorus and Astrampsyclus, or the modern chiromancy and divinations of gypsies.

I proceed now to the two remaining paradoxes of such sects of Atheists, as laying aside astrology and the unintelligible influence of heavenly bodies, except that which proceeds from their gravity, and heat, and light, do either produce mankind mechanically and necessarily from certain connections of natural causes; or more dully and supinely, though altogether as reasonably, resolve the whole business into the unaccountable shuffles and tumults of matter, which they call chance and accident. But at present I shall only take an account of the supposed production of human bodies by mechanism and necessity.

The mechanical or corpuscular philosophy, though peradventure the oldest as well as the best

best in the world, had lain buried for many ages in contempt and oblivion, till it was happily restored and cultivated anew by some excellent wits of the present age. But it principally owes its re-establishment and lustre to Mr. Boyle, that honourable person of ever-blessed memory, who hath not only shewn its usefulness in physiology above the vulgar doctrines of real qualities and substantial forms, but likewise its great serviceableness to religion itself. And I think it hath been competently proved in a former discourse, how friendly it is to the immateriality of human souls, and consequently to the existence of a supreme spiritual Being. And I may have occasion hereafter to shew further, that all the powers of mechanism are entirely dependent on the Deity, and do afford a solid argument for the reality of his nature. So far am I from the apprehension of any great feats that this mechanical Atheist can do against religion. For, if we consider the phenomena of the material world with a due and serious attention, we shall plainly perceive, that its present frame and system and all the established laws of nature are constituted and preserved by gravitation alone. That is the powerful cement, which holds together this magnificent structure of the world; ^a *which stretcheth*

^a Job xxvi. 7.

the north over the empty space, and hangeth the earth upon nothing ; if we may transfer the words of Job from the first and real cause to the secondary agent. Without gravity the whole universe, if we suppose an undetermined power of motion infused into matter, would have been a confused chaos, without beauty or order, and never stable and permanent in any condition. Now it may be proved, in its due place, that this gravity, the great basis of all mechanism, is not itself mechanical ; but the immediate *fiat* and finger of God, and the execution of the divine law ; and that bodies have not the power of tending towards a centre, either from other bodies or from themselves : which at once, if it be proved, will undermine and ruin all the towers and batteries that the Atheists have raised against heaven. For, if no compound body in the visible world can subsist and continue without gravity, and if gravity do immediately flow from a divine power and energy ; it will avail them nothing, though they should be able to explain all the particular effects, even the origination of animals, by mechanical principles. But however at present I will forbear to urge this against the Atheist. For, though I should allow him, that this catholic principle of gravitation is essential to matter without introducing a God ; yet I will defy him to shew,
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how a human body could be at first produced naturally, according to the present system of things, and the mechanical affections of matter.

And because this Atheist professeth to believe as much as we; that the first production of mankind was in a quite different manner from the present and ordinary method of nature, and yet affirms nevertheless, that that was natural too; which seems at the first sight to be little less than a contradiction; it should lie upon him to make out, how matter by undirected motion could at first necessarily fall, without ever erring or miscarrying, into such a curious formation of human bodies; a thing, that by his own confession it was never able to do since, or at least hath not done for some thousands of years: he should declare to us what shape and contexture matter then had, which it cannot have now: how it came to be altered by long course of time, so that living men can no longer be produced out of putrefaction in the primary way; and yet the species of mankind, that now consists of and is nourished by matter so altered, should continue to be the same as it was from the beginning. He should undertake to explain to us the first steps and the whole progress of such a formation; at least, by way of hypothesis, how it naturally might have been, though

though he affirm not that it was actually so. Whether he hath a new notion peculiar to himself about that production, or takes up with some old one, that is ready at hand: whether that most witty conceit of ^b Anaximander, that the first men and all animals were bred in some warm moisture, inclosed in crustaceous skins, as if they were various kinds of crabfish and lobsters; and so continued till they arrived at perfect age, when their shelly prisons growing dry and breaking made way for their liberty: or the no less ingenious opinion of the great ^c Empedocles, that mother earth first brought forth vast numbers of legs, and arms, and heads, and the other members of the body, scattered and distinct, and all at their full growth; which coming together and cementing, (as the pieces of snakes and lizards are said to do, if one cuts them asunder,) and so configuring themselves into human shape, made lusty proper men of thirty years age in an instant: or rather the divine doctrine of Epicurus and the ^d Egyptians, that there first grew up a sort of wombs, that had their roots in the earth, and attracted thence a kind of milk for the nourishment of

^b Plutarch. de Plac. Phil. lib. v. c. 29. et Sympos. l. viii. c. 8. Censorinus de Die Natali, cap. 4.

^c Plutarch. de Plac. Phil. lib. v. cap. 19. Censorin. ibidem.

^d Censorinus, ibid. Lucret. lib. v. Diódorus Siculus, lib. i. c. 2.

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the inclosed *fœtus* ; which at the time of maturity broke through those membranes, and shifted for themselves. I say; he ought to acquaint us which of these he is for, or bring a new explication of his own, and not require us to prove the negative, that a spontaneous production of mankind, neither warranted by example, nor defended by reason, nevertheless may not *possibly* have been true. This is a very unreasonable demand, and we might justly put him off with such an answer as this; that there are several things, which all men in their wits do disbelieve, and yet none but madmen will go about to disprove. But, to shew him how much we endeavour to satisfy and oblige him, I will venture once for his sake to incur the censure of some persons for being elaborately trifling; for, with respect to the most of mankind, such wretched absurdities are more wisely contemned than confuted; and to give them a serious answer, may only make them look more considerable.

First then, I take it for granted by him, that there were the same laws of motion, and the like general fabric of the earth, sea, and atmosphere, at the beginning of mankind, as there are at this day. For if any laws at first were once settled and constituted; like those of the Medes and Persians, they are never to be reversed. To violate and infringe them, is
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the same as what we call miracle; and doth not sound very philosophically out of the mouth of an Atheist. He must allow therefore, that bodies were endowed with the same affections and tendencies then as ever since; and that, if an *axe head* be supposed to float upon water, which is specifically much lighter than it, it had been supernatural at that time, as well as in the days of Elisha. And this is all I desire him to acknowledge at present. So that he may admit of those arguments as valid and conclusive against his hypothesis, that are fairly drawn from the present powers of matter, and the visible constitution of the world.

Now that we may come to the point; all matter is either fluid or solid, in a large acceptation of the words, that they may comprehend even all the middle degrees between extreme fixedness and coherency, and the most rapid intestine motion of the particles of bodies. Now the most cavilling Atheist must allow, that a solid inanimate body, while it remains in that state, where there is none or a very small and inconsiderable change of texture, is wholly incapable of a vital production. So that the first human body, without parents and without creator, if such an one ever was,

• 2 Kings vi. 5.

must

must have naturally been produced in and constituted by a fluid. And, because this Atheist goes mechanically to work, the universal laws of fluids must have been rigidly observed during the whole process of the formation. 'Now this is a catholic rule of statics; that if any body be bulk for bulk heavier than a fluid, it will sink to the bottom of that fluid; and, if lighter, it will float upon it; having part of itself extant, and part immersed to such a determinate depth, as that so much of the fluid as is equal in bulk to the immersed part be equal in gravity to the whole: and consequently, if several portions of one and the same fluid have a different specific gravity, the heavier will always (in a free vessel) be gradually the lower; unless violently shaken and blended together by external concussion. But that cannot be in our present case. For I am unwilling to affront this Atheist so much, as to suppose him to believe, that the first organical body might possibly be effected in some fluid portion of matter, while its heterogeneous parts were jumbled and confounded together by a storm, or hurricane, or earthquake. To be sure he will rather have the primitive man to be produced by a long pro-

¹ Archimedes de Inſidentibus humido, lib. i. Steven des Elémens Hydroſtatiques.

cess in a kind of digesting *balneum*, where all the heavier lees may have time to subside, and a due *æquilibrium* be maintained, not disturbed by any such rude and violent shocks, that would ruffle and break all the little *flamina* of the *embryon*, if it were a making before. Now, because all the parts of an undisturbed fluid are either of equal gravity, or gradually placed and storied according to the differences of it; any concretion, that can be supposed to be naturally and mechanically made in such a fluid, must have a like structure of its several parts; that is, either be all over of a similar gravity, or have the more ponderous parts nearer to its basis. But there need no more concessions than this to extinguish these supposed firstborn of nature in their very formation. For, suppose a human body to be a forming in such a fluid in any imaginable posture, it will never be reconcileable to this hydrostatical law. There will be always something lighter beneath, and something heavier above; because bone, or what is then the stuff and rudiments of bone, the heaviest *in specie*, will be ever in the midst. Now what can make the heavier particles of bone ascend above the lighter ones of flesh, or depress these below those, against the tendency of their own nature? This would be wholly as miraculous, as the swimming of iron in water

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at the command of Elisha ; and as impossible to be, as that the lead of an edifice should naturally and spontaneously mount up to the roof, while lighter materials employ themselves beneath it : or that a statue, like that in Nebuchadnezzar's vision, whose head was of fine and most ponderous gold, and his feet of lighter materials, iron and clay, should mechanically erect itself upon them for its basis.

Secondly, because this Atheist goes mechanically to work, he will not offer to affirm, that all the parts of the *embryon* could according to his explication be formed at a time: This would be a supernatural thing, and an effectual refutation of his own principles. For, the corpuscles of matter having no consciousness of one another's acting, (at least before or during the formation ; as will be allowed by that very Atheist, that attributes reason and perception to them when the formation is finished,) they could not consent and make a compact together to carry on the work in several places at once ; and one party of them be forming the brain, while another is modelling the heart, and a third delineating the veins. No, there must be, according to mechanism, a successive and gradual operation : some few particles must first be united together, and so by apposition and mutual connection still more and more by degrees, till

the whole system be completed ; and a fermentation must be excited in some assignable place, which may expand itself by its elastical power, and break through where it meets with the weakest resistance ; and so, by that so simple and mechanical action, may excavate all the various ducts and ventricles of the body. This is the only general account, as mean as it appears to be, that this machine of an Atheist can give of that *fearful and wonderful* production. Now, to confute these pretences, first, there is that visible harmony and symmetry in a human body, such a mutual communication of every vessel and member of it, as gives an internal evidence that it was not formed successively, and patched up by piece-meal. So uniform and orderly a system with innumerable motions and functions, all so placed and constituted as never to interfere and clash one with another, and disturb the economy of the whole, must needs be ascribed to an intelligent artist ; and to such an artist, as did not begin the matter unprepared, and at a venture ; and, when he was put to a stand, paused and hesitated which way he should proceed ; but he had first in his comprehensive intellect a complete *idea* and model of the whole organical body, before he entered upon the work. But, secondly, if they affirm, that mere matter by its mechanical affections, without any design
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or direction, could form the body by steps and degrees; what member then do they pitch upon for the foundation and cause of all the rest? Let them shew us the beginning of this circle, and the first wheel of this perpetual motion. Did the blood first exist, antecedent to the formation of the heart? But that is to set the effect before the cause; because all the blood, that we know of, is made in and by the heart, having the quite different form and qualities of chyle before it comes thither. Must the heart then have been formed and constituted before the blood was in being? But here again, the substance of the heart itself is most certainly made and nourished by the blood, which is conveyed to it by the coronary arteries. And thus it is through the whole system of the body; every member doth mutually sustain and supply one another; and all are coetaneous, because none of them can subsist alone. But they will say, & that a little ferment first making a cavity, which became the left ventricle of the heart, did thence farther expand itself, and thereby delineate all the arteries of the body. Now, if such a slight and sorry business as that could produce an organical body, one might reasonably expect, that now and then a dead lump of dough

• Cartesius de Formatione Foetus.

might be leavened into an animal : for there a like ferment makes notable tumours and ventricles, besides long and small channels, which may pass tolerably well for arteries and veins. But, I pray, in this supposed mechanical formation, when the ferment was expanded to the extremities of the arteries, if it still had any elastical force remaining, why did it not go on and break through the receptacle, as other ferment must be allowed to have done, at the mouth and the nostrils ? There was as yet no membranous skin formed, that might stop and repel it. Or, if the force of it was spent, and did not wheel about and return, what mechanical cause then shall we assign for the veins ? for this ferment is there supposed to have proceeded from the small capillary extremities of them to the great vein and the heart ; otherwise it made valves, which would have stopped its own passage. And why did that ferment, that at first dispersed itself from the great artery into infinite little ramifications, take a quite contrary method in the making of the veins, where innumerable little rivulets have their confluence into the great vein, the common channel of the blood ? Are such opposite motions both equally mechanical, when in both cases the matter was under the same modification ? And again, when the first ferment is excited,
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and forms the left ventricle of the heart, if the fluid matter be uniform and of a similar texture, and therefore on all sides equally resist the expansion, then the cavity must continue one, dilated more and more till the expansive force and the uniform resistance be reduced to an equality, and so nothing at all can be formed by this ferment but a single round bubble. And moreover this bubble, (if that could make a heart,) by reason of its comparative levity to the fluid that encloses it, would necessarily ascend to the top; and consequently we should never find the heart in the midst of the breast. But, if the fluid be supposed to consist of heterogeneous particles, then we cannot conceive how those dissimilar parts should have a like situation in two several fluids when the ferment begins. So that upon this supposition there could be no species of animals, nor any similitude between them: one would have its lungs where another hath its liver, and all the other members preposterously placed; there could not be a like configuration of parts in any two individuals. And again, what is that which determines the growth of all living creatures? What principles of mechanism are sufficient to explain it? Why do not all animals continually increase in bigness during the whole space of their lives, as it is reported of the crocodile? What

sets a bound to their stature and dimensions ? Or, if we suppose a bound and *ne plus ultra* to be mechanically fixed : but then, why so great a variety in the bulk of the several kinds ? Why also such constancy observed in that manifold variety ? For, as some of the largest trees have seeds no bigger or even less than some diminutive plants, and yet every seed is a perfect plant with trunk and branches and leaves enclosed in a shell ; ^h so the first *embryon* of an ant is supposed by inquisitive naturalists to be as big as that of an elephant, and to promise as fair at its primitive formation for as spacious a body : which nevertheless by an immutable decree can never arrive to the millionth part of the other's bulk. And what modification of the first liquid matter can vary so much as to make one *embryon* capable of so prodigiously vast augmentation, while another is confined to the minuteness of an insect ? Is not this manifestly a divine sanction, that hath fixed and determined the shape, the stature, the appetites, and the duration of all creatures in the world ? Hither must we have recourse in that great and mysterious affair of an organical formation : and I profess that I cannot discern one step in the whole, that is agreeable to the natural laws of motion.

^h Swammerdam, *Hist. Insect.* p. 3.

If we consider the heart, which is supposed to be the first principle of motion and life, and divide it by our imagination into its constituent parts, its arteries, and veins, and nerves, and tendons, and membranes, and innumerable little fibres, that these secondary parts do consist of, we shall find nothing here singular, but what is in any other muscle of the body. It is only the site and posture of these several parts, and the configuration of the whole, that give it the form and functions of a heart. Now why should the first single fibres in the formation of the heart be peculiarly drawn in spiral lines, when the fibres of all other muscles are made by a transverse rectilinear motion? What could determine the fluid matter into that odd and singular figure, when as yet no other member is supposed to be formed, that might direct the course of that fluid matter? Let mechanism here make an experiment of its power, and produce a spiral and turbinated motion of the whole moved body without an external director. When all the organs are once framed by a supernatural and divine principle, we do willingly admit of mechanism in many functions of the body; but, that the organs themselves should be mechanically formed, we conceive it to be impossible and utterly inexplicable. And, if any Atheist will give a clear and philosophical account of the things that are
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here touched upon, he may then hear of many more, and perhaps more difficult, than these ; which their unfitness for a popular auditory, and the remaining parts of my subject that press forward to be treated of, oblige me now to omit.

But, as the Atheist, when he is put to it to explain, how any motion of dead matter can beget thought and perception, will endeavour to defend his baffled impiety with the instance of brutes, which he calls thinking machines ; so will he now also appeal from the arbitration of reason in the case of animal productions to example and matter of fact. He will declaim to us about the admirable structure of the bodies of insects ; that they have all the vital parts, which the largest of quadrupeds, and even man himself can boast of ; and yet they are the easy and obvious products of unintelligent nature, that spontaneously and mechanically forms them out of putrefied carcases and the warm moisture of the soil ; and (which is mightily to his purpose) the insects, so begotten without parents, have nevertheless fit organs of generation and difference of sex, and can propagate their own kinds, as if themselves had been begotten so too : and that if mother earth, in this her barrenness and decrepitness of age, can procreate such swarms of curious engines, which not
only

only themselves enjoy their portion of life, but by a most wonderful instinct impart it to many more, and continue their species; might she not in the flower of her youth, while she was succulent and fertile, have produced horses and elephants and even mankind itself, the largest and perfectest animals, as easily as in this parched and steril condition she can make a frog or an insect? Thus, he thinks, he hath made out from example and analogy, that at the beginning of things every species of animals might spring mechanically out of the soil without an intelligent Creator. And indeed there is no one thing in the world, which hath given so much countenance and shadow of possibility to the notion of atheism, as this unfortunate mistake about the equivocal generation of insects: and, as the oldest remains of atheistical writings are full of this comparison, so it is the main refuge of those, that in this and the last age have had the folly and impudence to appear in so wretched a cause.

Now to this last subterfuge of the mechanical Atheists we can occur several ways. And at present we affirm, first, *ex abundanti*, that, though we should allow them the spontaneous production of some minute animals, yet a like primitive origination of mankind could not hence be concluded; because they first tacitly suppose, that there is an universal decay of moisture

moisture and fertility in the earth. And they cannot avoid the necessity of so doing: for, if the soil be as fruitful now as it was in the beginning, why would it not produce men, and the nobler kind of beasts in our days too, if ever it did so? So that, if that supposition be evinced to be erroneous and groundless, all the arguments that they build upon it will be subverted at once. Now what more easily refuted, than that old vulgar assertion of an universal drought and exsiccation of the earth? as if the Sun could evaporate the least drop of its moisture, so that it should never descend again, but be attracted and elevated quite out of the atmosphere? It is now a matter agreed and allowed by all competent judges, that every particle of matter is endowed with a principle of gravity, whereby it would descend to the centre, if it were not repelled upward by heavier bodies. So that the smallest corpuscle of vapour, if we suppose it to be exhaled to the top of the atmosphere, thence it must come down again, or at least must there remain incumbent upon others; for there is either nothing or nothing heavier above it to protrude it any higher; neither can it spontaneously mount any more against the tendency of its nature. And, lest some ignorant Atheist should suspect that peradventure there may be no such top of the atmosphere, but

but that it may be continued on to the Sun or to indefinite space; he must vouchsafe to be instructed, that the whole weight of any column of the atmosphere, and likewise the specific gravity of its basis, are certainly known by many experiments; and that by this computation (even making allowance for its gradually larger expansion, the higher we go) the very top of any pillar of air is not one hundred miles distant from the surface of the earth. So that hence it is manifest, that the whole terraqueous globe with its atmosphere cannot naturally have lost the least particle of moisture since the foundation of the world. But still they may insist, that, although the whole globe cannot be deprived of any of its moisture, yet the habitable earth may have been perpetually the drier, seeing it is assiduously drained and exhausted by the seas. But to this we reply, that the very contrary is demonstrable; that the longer the world shall continue, the moister the whole aggregate of the land will be. For (to take no notice of the supply of its moisture by rains and snow and dews and condensation of vapours, and perhaps by subterraneous passages) the tops of mountains and hills will be continually washed down by the rains, and the channels of rivers corroded by the streams; and the mud that is thereby conveyed into
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the sea will raise its bottom the higher ; and consequently the declivity of rivers will be so much the less ; and therefore the continents will be the less drained, and will gradually increase in humidity from the first period of their duration to the final consummation of all things ; if the successive production of plants and animals, which are all made up of and nourished by water, and perhaps never return to water again, do not keep things at a poise ; or if the divine power do not interpose and change the settled course and order of nature.

But let us allow their supposition, that the total of the dry land may have been robbed of some of its moisture which it had at its first constitution ; yet still there are some parts of the earth sufficiently soaked and watered to produce men and animals now, if ever they did at all. For do not the Nile, and the Niger, and the Ganges, and the Menam, make yearly inundations in our days, as they have formerly done ? And are not the countries so overflown still situate between the tropics under the direct and most vigorous rays of the Sun, the very place where these mechanical Atheists lay the scene of that great transaction ? so that, if mankind had ever sprung naturally out of the soil, the experiment would succeed now every year in Æthiopia and Siam, where are all the requisite qualifications that ever have been
been

been for such a production. And again, if there hath been such a gradual diminution of the generative faculty of the earth, that it hath dwindled from nobler animals to puny mice and insects; why was there not the like decay in the production of vegetables? We should have lost by this time the whole species of oaks and cedars and the other tall and lofty sons of the forest, and have found nothing but dwarfish shrubs and creeping moss and despicable mushrooms. Or, if they deny the present spontaneous production of larger plants, and confine the earth to as pigmy births in the vegetable kingdom, as they do in the other, yet surely in such a supposed universal decay of nature, even mankind itself, that is now nourished (though not produced) by the earth, must have degenerated in stature and strength in every generation. And yet we have certain demonstration from the Egyptian mummies, and Roman urns and rings, and measures and edifices, and many other antiquities, that human stature is not diminished at all for the last two thousand years. Now, if the decay has not been constant and gradual, there has been no decay at all; or at least no natural one, nor what may be accounted for by this mechanical Atheist. I conclude therefore, that, although we should allow the spontaneous production of insects, yet no argument

ment can be deduced from thence for a like origination of mankind.

But, secondly, we affirm, that no insect or animal did ever proceed equivocally from putrefaction, unless in miraculous cases, as in Egypt by the divine judgments, but all are generated from parents of their own kind, male and female; a discovery of that great importance, that perhaps few inventions of this age can pretend to equal usefulness and merit; and which alone is sufficient (if the vices of men did not captivate their reason) to explode and exterminate rank Atheism out of the world. For, if all animals be propagated by generation from parents of their own species, and there be no instance in nature of even a gnat or a mite either now or in former ages spontaneously produced; how came there to be such animals in being, and whence could they proceed? There is no need of much study and deliberation about it: for either they have existed eternally by infinite successions already gone and past, which is in its very notion absurd and impossible; or their origin must be ascribed to a supernatural and divine power, that formed and created them. Now, to prove our assertion about the seminal production of all living creatures, that we may not repeat the

¹ See the former Sermon.

reasons

reasons which we have offered before against the first mechanical formation of human bodies, which are equally valid against the spontaneous origin of the minutest insects; we appeal to observation and experiment, which carry the strongest conviction with them, and make the most sensible and lasting impressions.

^k For, whereas it hath been the general tradition and belief, that maggots and flies breed in putrefied carcases, and particularly bees come from oxen, and hornets from horses, and scorpions from crabfish, &c. all this is now found to be fable and mistake. That sagacious and learned naturalist, ^l Francisco Redi, made innumerable trials with the putrid flesh of all sorts of beasts and fowls, and fishes and serpents, with corrupted cheese, and herbs, and fruits, and even insects themselves; and he constantly found, that all those kinds of putrefaction did only afford a nest and aliment for the eggs and young of those insects that he admitted to come there, but produced no animal of themselves by a spontaneous formation: for, when he suffered those things to putrefy in hermetically sealed glasses, and vessels close covered with paper; and not only so, lest the exclusion of the air might be supposed to

^k Ἰπποὶ μὲν σφηκῶν γένεσις, ταῦτοι δὲ μλισσῶν. Nicander.

^l Redi de Generatione Insectorum.

hinder the experiment, but in vessels covered with fine lawn, so as to admit the air and keep out the insects; no living thing was ever produced there, though he exposed them to the action of the Sun, in the warm climate of Florence, and in the kindest season of the year. Even flies crushed and corrupted, when enclosed in such vessels, did never procreate a new fly; though there, if in any case, one would have expected that success. And when the vessels were open, and the insects had free access to the aliment within them, he diligently observed, that no other species were produced, but of such as he saw go in and feed, and deposit their eggs there; which they would readily do in all putrefaction, even in a mucilage of bruised spiders, where worms were soon hatched out of such eggs, and quickly changed into flies of the same kind with their parents. And was not that a surprising transformation indeed, if, according to the vulgar opinion, those dead and corrupted spiders spontaneously changed into flies? And thus far we are obliged to the diligence of Redi: from whence we may conclude, that no dead flesh, nor herbs, nor other putrefied bodies, nor any thing that hath not then actually either a vegetable or animal life, can produce any insect. And if we should allow, as he did, that every animal and plant doth naturally

rally breed and nourish by its substance some peculiar insect, yet the Atheist could make no advantage of this concession as to a like origination of mankind. For surely it is beyond even an Atheist's credulity and impudence, to affirm that the first men might proceed out of the galls and tumors of leaves of trees, as some maggots and flies are supposed to do now; or might grow upon trees, as the story goes about barnacles; or perhaps might be the lice of some vast prodigious animals, whose species is now extinct. But, though we suppose him guilty of such an extravagant folly, he will only shift the difficulty, and not wholly remove it; for we shall still expect an account of the spontaneous formation of those mountainous kind of animals and men-bearing trees. And, as to the worms that are bred in the intestines and other inward parts of living creatures, their production is not material to our present enquiry, till some Atheist do affirm, that his own ancestors had such an original. I say, if we should allow this concession of Redi, it would do no service to our adversaries: but even here also they are defeated by the happy curiosity of ^m Malpighi and others, who observed and discovered, that each of those tu-

^m Malpighius de Gallis. Swammerdam de Gen. Insect. Lewenhoeck Epistol.

mors and excrescences of plants, out of which generally issues a fly or a worm, are at first made by such insects, which wound the tender buds with a long hollow trunk, and deposit an egg in the hole with a sharp corroding liquor, which causeth a swelling in the leaf, and so closeth the orifice: and within this tumor the worm is hatched, and receives its aliment, till it hath eat its way through. Neither need we recur to an equivocal production of vermin in the *phthiriasis* and in Herod's disease, who was *σκαληκόβρωτος*, ⁿ *eaten of worms*, or maggots. Those horrible distempers are always accompanied with putrefying ulcers; and it hath been observed by the most accurate ^o Lewenhoeck, that lice and flies, which have a most wonderful instinct and acuteness of sense to find out convenient places for the hatching and nourishment of their young, do mightily endeavour to lay their eggs upon fores; and that one will lay above a hundred eggs, and may naturally increase to some hundreds of thousands in a quarter of a year: which gives a full and satisfactory account of the *phænomena* of those diseases. And whereas it is said, Exod. xvi. ver. 20. that some of the *Israelites left of the manna until the morning, and it bred worms and stank*; which an Athe-

ⁿ Acts xii. 23.

^o Continuat. Epistol. p. 101.

ist may make an objection, as either against us, or against the truth of the Scriptures : I understand it no otherwise, than that the manna was *fly-blown*. It was then the month of October, which in that southern climate, after the preceding autumnal rains, doth afford a favourable season and copious nutriment for infinite swarms of insects. Neither do I ascribe it to a miraculous power, that some of the manna should breed worms, but that all the rest should be preserved sound and untainted. And, if any one shall rigidly urge from that passage the literal expression of *breeding*, he must allow Moses to speak in the language of the vulgar in common affairs of life. We do now generally believe the Copernican system ; yet I suppose upon ordinary occasions we shall still use the popular terms of sun-rise and sun-set, and not introduce a new pedantic description of them from the motion of the earth. And then, as to the vulgar opinion, that frogs are made in the clouds, and brought down by the rains, it may be thus easily refuted : for at that very instant, when they are supposed to descend, you may find by dissection not only their stomachs full of meat, but their intestines full of excrement ; so that they had lurked before in the day-time in holes and bushes and grass, and were then invited abroad by the freshness of a shower.

And by this time we may understand, what credit and authority those old stories ought to have about the monstrous productions in Egypt after the inundation of the Nile, of mice and frogs and serpents, half flesh and half mud ; nay, of the legs, and arms, and other limbs of men, *et quicquid Græcia mendax* ; altogether as true as what is seriously related by P Helmont, that foul linen, stopped in a vessel that hath wheat in it, will in twenty-one days time turn the wheat into mice : which one may guess to have been the philosophy and information of some housewife, who had not so carefully covered her wheat but that the mice could come at it, and were there taken napping, just when they had made an end of their cheer. Corn is so innocent from this calumny of breeding of mice, that it doth not produce the very weevils that live in it and consume it ; the whole course of whose generation and periodical changes hath been curiously observed and described by the ingenious Lewenhœck. And, moreover, that we may deprive the Atheist of all hopes and pretensions of argument from this baffled opinion of equivocal insects, we will acquaint him from the most accurate observations of Swammerdam, that even the supposed change of worms

* Helmont, *Imago Ferment.* &c. p. 92. Edit. 1652.

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into flies is no real transmutation; but that most of those members, which at last become visible to the eye, are existent at the beginning, artificially complicated together, and covered with membranes and tunicles, which are afterwards stript off and laid aside; and all the rest of that process is no more surprising than the eruption of horns in some brutes, or of teeth and beard in men at certain periods of age. And, as we have established our assertion of the seminal production of all kinds of animals, so likewise we affirm, that the meanest plant cannot be raised without seed by any formative power residing in the soil. To which assertion we are encouraged, first, from the known seeds of all vegetables, one or two only excepted, that are left to future discovery; which seeds by the help of microscopes are all found to be real and perfect plants, with leaves and trunk curiously folded up and enclosed in the *cortex*; nay, one single grain of wheat, or barley, or rye, shall contain four or five distinct plants under one common tunicle; a very convincing argument of the providence and goodness of God, that those vegetables, that were appointed to be the chief sustenance of mankind, should have that multiplied fecundity above any others. And, secondly, by that famous experiment of Malpighi, who a long time enclosed a quantity of earth in a vessel, secured

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by a fine cloth from the small imperceptible seeds of plants that are blown about with the winds; and had this success of his curiosity, to be the first happy discoverer of this noble and important truth, that no species of plants can be produced out of earth without a pre-existent seed; and consequently they were all created and raised at the beginning of things by the almighty gardener, God blessed for ever. And, lastly, as to those various and elegant shells, that are dug up in continents, and embodied in stones and rocks at a vast distance from any sea; which this Atheist may possibly alledge for an instance of a plastic faculty of nature; it is now generally agreed by the most diligent inquirers about them, that they are no sportful productions of the soil, as was formerly believed, but that all did once belong to real and living fishes; since each of them exactly resembles some shell of the seas, both in its outward lineaments, and inward texture, and specific gravity, and all other properties: which therefore are so far from being subservient to Atheists in their audacious attempts against God and religion, that they rather afford an experimental confirmation of the universal deluge.

And thus we have competently shewn, that every species of living creatures, every small insect, and even the herbs of the field, give a
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casting vote against Atheism, and declare the necessity of a supernatural formation. If the earth in its first constitution had been left to itself, what horrid deformity and desolation had for ever overspread its face ! Not one living inhabitant would be found on all its spacious surface ; not so much as a worm in the bowels of it, nor one single fish in the vast bosom of the sea ; not a mantle of grass or moss to cover and conceal the nakedness of nature. An eternal sterility must have possessed the world, where all things had been fixed and fastened everlastingly with the adamantine chains of specific gravity ; if the Almighty had not spoken and said, *Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit-tree yielding fruit after its kind ; and it was so.* It was God that then created the first seminal forms of all animals and vegetables, that *commanded the waters to bring forth abundantly, and the earth to produce living creatures after their kind ; that made man in his own image after his own likeness ; that by the efficacy of his first blessing made him be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth ; by whose alone power and conservation we all live, and move, and have our being.*

May the same most glorious God of his infinite

finite mercy grant, that, as we *have sought the Lord, and felt after him, and found him* in these works of his creation ; so now that *we have known God, we may glorify him as God*, both now and for evermore. *Amen.*

A CONFUTATION OF ATHEISM

FROM THE

STRUCTURE AND ORIGIN OF HUMAN BODIES.

THE THIRD AND LAST PART.

SERMON V.

Preached September the 5th, 1692.

ACTS xvii. 27, 28.

That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him; though he be not far from every one of us: for in him we live, and move, and have our being.

IN my former discourses I have endeavoured to prove, that human race was neither (1) from everlasting without beginning; nor (2) owes its beginning to the influence of heavenly bodies; nor (3) to what they call nature, that is, the necessary and mechanical motions of dead senseless matter. I proceed now to examine the fourth and last plea of the enemies to religion and their own souls, that mankind came accidentally into the world, and hath its life

life and motion and being by mere *chance* and *fortune*.

We need not much wonder, that this last opinion should obtain almost universally among the Atheists of these times. For, whereas the other require some small stock of philosophy to understand or maintain them, this account is so easy and compendious, that it needs none at all; and consequently is the more proper and agreeable to the great industry and capacity of the most numerous party of them. For what more easy to say, than that all the bodies of the first animals and plants were shuffled into their several forms and structures *fortuitously*; that is, these Atheists know not how, nor will trouble themselves to endeavour to know? For that is the meaning of chance; and yet this is all that they say, or can say to the great matter in question. And indeed this little is enough in all reason; and, could they impose on the rest of mankind, as easily as delude themselves, with a notion, that *chance* can effect a thing; it would be the most expedite and effectual means to make their cause victorious over virtue and religion. For, if you once allow them such an acceptance of chance, you have precluded yourself, they think, from any more reasoning and objecting against them. The mechanical Atheist, though you grant him his laws of
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mechanism, is nevertheless inextricably puzzled and baffled with the first formation of animals: for he must undertake to determine all the various motions and figures and positions and combinations of his atoms; and to demonstrate, that such a quantity of motion, impressed upon particles so shaped and situated, will necessarily range and dispose them into the form and frame of an organical body: an attempt as difficult and unpromising of success, as if he himself should make the essay to produce some new kinds of animals out of such senseless materials, or to rebuild the moving and living fabric out of its dust in the grave. But the Atheist that we are now to deal with, if you do but concede to him that fortune may be an agent, presumes himself safe and invulnerable, secure above the reach of any further disputes. For, if you proceed to ask questions, and bid him assign the proper causes and determinate manner of that fortuitous formation, you thereby deny him what you granted before, and take away the very hypothesis and the nature of chance; which supposeth that no certain cause or manner of it can possibly be assigned. And as the stupidity of some libertines, that demand a sight of a spirit or human soul to convince them of its existence, hath been frequently and deservedly exposed; because whatsoever may be the object

ject of our sight, must not be a soul or spirit, but an opaque body ; so this Atheist would tax us of the like nonsense and contradiction, if, after he hath named to us fortune or chance, we should expect from him any particular and distinct account of the origin of mankind : because it is the very essence and notion of his chance, to be wholly unaccountable : and, if an account could be given of it, it would then no longer be chance but mechanism, or a necessary production of certain effects from certain causes according to the universal laws of motion. Thus we are to know, that if once we admit of fortune in the formation of mankind, there is no further enquiry to be made, no more difficulties to be solved, and no account to be demanded. And who then can admire, if the inviting easiness and compendiousness of this assertion should so dazzle the eyes of our Atheist, that he overlooks those gross absurdities, that are so conspicuous in it ?

(1) For, first, if this Atheist would have his chance or fortune to be a real and substantial agent ; as the vulgar seem to have commonly apprehended, some making it a divinity, others they do not conceive what ; he is doubly more stupid and more supinely ignorant than those vulgar ; in that he assumes such a notion of fortune, as, besides its being erroneous, is inconsistent.

consistent with his atheism. For since, according to the Atheists, the whole universe is *corpus et inane, body and nothing else*; this chance, if it do really and physically effect any thing, must itself be body also. And what a numerous train of absurdities do attend such an assertion! too visible and obvious to deserve to be here insisted on. For indeed it is no less than flat contradiction to itself. For, if this chance be supposed to be a body, it must then be a part of the common mass of matter; and consequently be subject to the universal and necessary laws of motion: and therefore it cannot be chance, but true mechanism and nature.

(2) But, secondly, if he forbear to call chance a real agent, and is content to have it only a result or event; since all matter or some portion of it may be naturally exempt from these supposed mechanical laws, and be endowed with a power of spontaneous or fortuitous motion; which power, when it is exerted, must produce an effect properly casual, and therefore might constitute the first animate bodies accidentally, against the supposed natural tendency of the particles of those bodies: even this second assertion is contrary to common sense, as well as common observation. For how can he conceive, that any parcel of dead matter can spontaneously divert
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and decline itself from the line of its motion, without a new impulse from external bodies ? If it can intrinsically stir itself, and either commence its motion or alter its course, it must have a principle of self-activity, which is life and sense. ^a But sense I have proved formerly to be incompatible with mere bodies, even those of the most compound and elaborate textures ; much more with single atoms or solid particles of matter, that having no intestine motion of parts are destitute of the first foundation and capacity of life. And moreover, though these particles should be supposed to have this internal principle of sense, it would still be repugnant to the notion of chance : because their motions would not then be casual, but voluntary ; not by chance, but choice and design. And again, we appeal to observation, whether any bodies have such a power of fortuitous motion. We should surely have experiment of it in the effects of nature and art : no body would retain the same constant and uniform weight according to its bulk and substance ; but would vary perpetually, as that spontaneous power of motion should determine its present tendency. All the various machines and utensils would now and then play odd pranks and capricio's

^a Serm. ii,

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quite contrary to their proper structures, and designs of the artificers. Whereas, on the contrary, all bodies are observed to have always a certain and determinate motion according to the degrees of their external impulse, and their inward principle of gravitation, and the resistance of the bodies they occur with : which therefore is without error exactly foreseen and computed by sagacious artists. And, if ever dead matter should deviate from this motion, it could not proceed from itself, but a supernatural agent ; and ought not to be called a chance, but a miracle.

For chance is but a mere name, and really nothing in itself ; a conception of our own minds, and only a compendious way of speaking, whereby we would express, that such effects as are commonly attributed to chance were verily produced by their true and proper causes, but without their designing to produce them. And in any event called casual, if you take away the real and physical causes, there remains nothing but a simple negation of the agents intending such an event : which negation being no real entity, but a conception only of man's intellect wholly extrinsic to the action, can have no title to a share in the production. As in that famous example, (which

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Plutarch

Plutarch ^b says is the only one, where fortune is related to have done a thing artificially,) when a painter having finished the picture of a horse, excepting the loose froth about his mouth and his bridle; and, after many unsuccessful essays despairing to do that to his satisfaction, in a great rage threw his sponge at it, all besmeared, as it was, with the colours; which fortunately hitting upon the right place, by one bold stroke of chance most exactly supplied the want of skill in the artist: even here it is manifest, that considering the quantity and determination of the motion, that was impressed by the painter's hand upon the sponge, and resistance of the air; the sponge did mechanically and unavoidably move in that particular line of motion, and so necessarily hit upon that part of the picture; and all the paint that it left there was as certainly placed by true natural causes, as any one stroke of the pencil in the whole piece. So that this strange effect of the sponge was fortuitous only with respect to the painter, because he did not design nor foresee such an effect; but in itself, as to its real causes, it was necessary and natural. In a word, the true notion of *fortune* (τῆς τύχης) denoteth

^b Plutarch. περὶ τύχης.

no more, than the ignorance of such an event in some knowing agent concerned about it. So that it owes its very being to human understanding, and without relation to that is really nothing. How absurd then and ridiculous is the Atheist, that would make this fortune the cause of the formation of mankind; whereas manifestly there could be no such thing or notion in the world as fortune, till human nature was actually formed? It was man that first made fortune, and not fortune that produced man. For, since fortune in its proper acceptation supposeth the ignorance of something, in a subject capable of knowledge; if you take away mankind, such a notion hath no existence, neither with relation to inanimate bodies that can be conscious of nothing, nor to an omniscient God that can be ignorant of nothing. And so likewise the adequate meaning of *chance* (*τῇ αἰτιμαίᾳ*) (as it is distinguished from fortune; in that the latter is understood to befall only rational agents, but chance to be among inanimate bodies) is a bare negation, that signifies no more than this, that any effect among such bodies ascribed to chance, is really produced by physical agents, according to the established laws of motion, but without their consciousness of concurring to the production, and without their intention of such an effect. So

that *chance*, in its true sense, is all one with *nature*; and both words are used promiscuously by ^csome ancient writers, to express the same thing. And we must be wary, lest we ascribe any real subsistence or personality to this nature or chance; for it is merely a notional and imaginary thing; an abstract universal, which is properly nothing; a conception of our own making, occasioned by our reflecting upon the settled course of things; denoting only thus much, that all those bodies move and act according to their essential properties and qualities without any consciousness or intention of so doing. So that in this genuine acceptation of chance here is nothing supposed that can supersede the known laws of natural motion: and thus to attribute the formation of mankind to chance, is all one with the former atheistical assertion, that ascribes it to nature or mechanism: and consequently it hath received a prolix and sufficient refutation in my preceding discourse.

(3) But thirdly, it is likely that our Atheist may willingly renounce the doctrine of chance as a thing differing from nature, and may allow it to be the same thing, and that too no real and substantial agent, but only an abstract

^c Plato x. de Legibus. Πῦρ καὶ ὕδωρ καὶ γῆ καὶ αἶθρ, πάντα εἶναι καὶ τύχῃ φασί—οὔτε διὰ τινὰ θεῶν, οὔτε διὰ τύχης, ἀλλὰ ὁ λέγομεν φύσει καὶ τύχῃ.

intellectual notion : but still he hath another expedient in reserve, which is a middle and safe way between the former rigorous mechanism and the extravagancies of fortuitous motion : viz. that at the beginning all things, it is true, proceeded necessarily and fatally according to the mechanical powers and affections of matter : but nevertheless the several kinds of animals were not formed at the first trial and effort without one error or miscarriage ; (as strict mechanism would suppose ;) but there was an immense variety of ferments, and tumors, and excrescences of the soil, pregnant and big with ^d *foetus*'s of all imaginable shapes and structures of body : millions of which were utterly incapable of life and motion, being the *molæ*, as it were, and the abortions of mother earth : and many of those that had life and powers to preserve their own individuals, yet wanted the due means of propagation, and therefore could not transmit their species to the following ages : and that those few only, that we now find in being, did happen (for he cannot express it but by the characters of a chance) to have all the parts necessary not only for their own lives, but for the continuation of their kinds. This is the favourite opinion among the Atheists, and the

^d Βρυεῖν ἀνδρόγευρα. Emped.

most plausible of all; by which they think they may elude that most formidable argument for the being of God, from the admirable contrivance of organical bodies and the exquisite fitness of their several parts for those ends and uses they are put to, and seem to have been designed for. For, say they, since those innumerable instances of blunder and deformity were quickly removed out of knowledge and being; it is plain that no animals ought now to be found, but such as have due organs necessary for their own nourishment and increase of their kinds: so that this boasted usefulness of parts, which makes men attribute their origination to an intelligent and wise agent, is really no argument at all; because it follows also from the Atheist's assertion. For, since some animals are actually preserved in being till now, they must needs all of them have those parts that are of use and necessity: but that at first was only a lucky hit without skill or design, and ever since is a necessary condition of their continuation. And so for instance, when they are urged with the admirable frame and structure of the eye; which consists of so great a variety of parts, all excellently adapted to the uses of vision; that (to omit mathematical considerations with relation to optics) hath its many coats and humours transparent and colourless, lest it should tinge
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and sophisticate the light that it lets in, by a natural jaundice; that hath its pupil so constituted, as to admit of contraction and dilatation according to the differing degrees of light, and the exigencies of seeing; that hath eyelids so commodiously placed, to cleanse the ball from dust, to shed necessary moisture upon it through numerous glandules, and to be drawn over it like a curtain for the convenience of sleep; that hath a thousand more beauties in its figure and texture never studied nor admired enough: they will briskly reply, that they willingly concede all that can be said in the commendation of so noble a member; yet notwithstanding they cannot admit, for good reasoning, *“He that formed the eye, shall not he see?”* For it was blind nature alone, or matter mechanically moved without consciousness or direction, that made this curious organ of vision. For the short of the matter is this: this elegant structure of the eye is no more than is necessary to life; and consequently is included in the very suppositions of any animals living and continuing till now; though those be but the very few that at the beginning had the good fortune to have eyes, among many millions of monsters that were destitute of them, *“sine vultu cæca reperta,”* and

* Psal. xciv. 9.

† Lucret. lib. v.

therefore did fatally perish soon after their birth. And thus, when we insist on other like arguments of divine wisdom in the frame of animate bodies ; as the artificial position of many myriads of valves, all so situate as to give a free passage to the blood and other humours in their due channels and courses, but not permit them to regurgitate and disturb the great circulation and economy of life ; as the spiral, and not annular, fibres of the intestines for the better exercise of their functions ; as the provident furnishing of temporary parts for the *foetus* during the time of gestation, which are afterwards laid aside ; as the strange sagacity of little insects in choosing fit places for the exclusion of their eggs, and for the provision of proper food, when the young ones are hatched and need it ; as the ardent *εὐπρην* or natural affection in those animals, whose offspring cannot at first procure their own sustenance, but must infallibly perish, if not fed by the parents ; as the untaught instincts and impresses upon every species, directing them without imitation or deliberation to the ready knowledge of proper food, to one and the best way of their preservation and defence, and to the never failing propagation of their own kind : whatever considerations of this nature you propose to this Atheist, as indeed such instances are innumerable, all evidently

dently setting forth the Almighty's wisdom and goodness to such as are able to judge, and will judge impartially; he hath this one subterfuge from them all, that these things are mistaken for tokens of skill and contrivance, though they be but necessary consequences of the present existence of those creatures. For he that supposeth any animals to subsist, doth by that very supposition allow them every member and faculty that are necessary to subsistence; such as are those we have just now enumerated. And therefore, unless we can prove *a priori* and independent of this usefulness, now that things are once supposed to have existed and propagated; that among almost infinite trials and essays at the beginning of things, among millions of monstrous shapes and imperfect formations, a few such animals, as now exist, *could not possibly* be produced; these after-considerations are of very little moment: because if such animals could in that way *possibly* be formed, as might live, and move, and propagate their beings; all this admired and applauded usefulness of their several fabrics is but a necessary condition and consequence of their existence and propagation.

This is the last pretence and sophistry of the Atheists against the proposition in my text, that we received our life and being from a divine wisdom and power. And, as they can-
not

not justly accuse me of any ways concealing or balking their grand objection ; so I believe these following considerations will give them no reason to boast, that it cannot receive a just and satisfactory answer.

(1.) First, therefore, we affirm that we can prove, and have done it already by arguments *a priori*, (which is the challenge of the Atheists,) that these animals, that now exist, could not *possibly* have been formed at first by millions of trials. For, since they allow by their very hypothesis (and without standing to their courtesy we have proved it before) that there can be no casual or spontaneous motion of the particles of matter ; it will follow that every single monster among so many supposed & myriads must have been mechanically and necessarily formed according to the known laws of motion, and the temperament and quality of the matter that it was made of. Which is sufficient to evince, that no such monsters were or could have been formed. For, to denominate them even monsters, they must have had some rude kind of organical bodies ; some *stamina* of life, though never so clumsy ; some system of parts compounded of solids and liquids, that executed, though but bunglingly,

* Multaque tum tellus etiam portenta creare, &c. Lucret. lib. v.

their

their peculiar motions and functions. But we have lately shewn it impossible for nature unassisted to constitute such bodies, whose structure is against the law of specific gravity. So that she could not make the least endeavour towards the producing of a monster ; or of any thing that hath more vital and organical parts, than we find in a rock of marble or a fountain of water. And again, though we should not contend with them about their monsters and abortions ; yet since they suppose even the perfect animals, that are still in being, to have been formed mechanically among the rest, and only add some millions of monsters to the reckoning ; they are liable to all the difficulties in the former explication, and are expressly refuted through the whole preceding sermon : where it is abundantly shewn, that a spontaneous production is against the catholic laws of motion, and against matter of fact : a thing without example, not only in man and the nobler animals, but in the smallest of insects and the vilest of weeds : though the fertility of the earth cannot be said to have been impaired since the beginning of the world.

(2.) Secondly, we may observe that this evasion of the Atheist is fitted only to elude such arguments of divine wisdom, as are taken from things necessary to the conservation of the animal, as the faculties of sight, and motion,

tion, and nutrition, and the like ; because such usefulness is indeed included in a general supposition of the existence of that animal : but it miserably fails him against other reasons from such members and powers of the body, as are not necessary absolutely to living and propagating, but only much conduce to our better subsistence and happier condition. So the most obvious contemplation of the frame of our bodies ; as that we all have double sensories, two eyes, two ears, two nostrils, is an effectual confutation of this atheistical sophism. For a double organ of these senses is not at all comprehended in the notion of bare existence ; one of them being sufficient to have preserved life, and kept up the species ; as common experience is a witness. Nay, even the very nails of our fingers are an infallible token of design and contrivance : for they are useful and convenient to give strength and firmness to those parts in the various functions they are put to ; and to defend the numerous nerves and tendons that are under them, which have a most exquisite sense of pain, and without that native armour would continually be exposed to it : and yet who will say, that nails are absolutely necessary to human life, and are concluded in the supposition of simple existence ? It is manifest therefore, that there was a contrivance and foresight of the usefulness of nails antecedent

dent to their formation. For the old stale pretence of the Atheists, ^b that things were first made fortuitously, and afterwards their usefulness was observed or discovered, can have no place here; unless nails were either absolutely requisite to the existence of mankind, or were found only in some individuals or some nations of men, and so might be ascribed to necessity upon one account, or to fortune upon the other. But, from the Atheist's supposition, that, among the infinite diversity of the first terrestrial productions, there were animals of all imaginable shapes and structures of body, all of which survived and multiplied, that by reason of their make and fabric could possibly do so; it necessarily follows, that we should now have some nations without nails upon their fingers; others with one eye only, as the poets describe the Cyclopes in Sicily, and the Arimaspi in Scythia; others with one ear, or one nostril, or indeed without any organ of smelling, because that sense is not necessary to man's subsistence; others destitute of the use of language, since mutes also may live: one people would have the feet of goats, as the feigned Satyrs and Panisci; another would resemble the head of Jupiter Ammon, or the

^b Nil adeo quoniam natum 'st in corpore, ut uti
Possemus, sed quod natum 'st, id procreat usum.

Lucret. iv. 832.

horned

horned statues of Bacchus: the ⁱ Sciapodes, and Enotocætæ, and other monstrous nations would no longer be fables, but real instances in nature: and, in a word, all the ridiculous and extravagant shapes that can be imagined, all the fancies and whimsies of poets, and painters, and Egyptian idolaters, if so be they are consistent with life and propagation, would be now actually in being, if our Atheist's notion were true: which therefore may deservedly pass for a mere dream and an error, till they please to make new discoveries in *terra incognita*, and bring along with them some savages of all these fabulous and monstrous configurations.

(3.) But, thirdly, that we may proceed yet further with the Atheist, and convince him, that not only his principle is absurd, but his consequences also as absurdly deduced from it; we will allow him an uncertain extravagant chance against the natural laws of motion: though not forgetting that that notion hath been refuted before, and therefore this concession is wholly *ex abundanti*. I say then, that though there were really such a thing as this chance or fortune, yet nevertheless it would be extremely absurd to ascribe the formation of human bodies to a cast of this

ⁱ Plinius et Strabo.

chance.

chance. For let us consider the very bodies themselves. Here are confessedly all the marks and characters of design in their structure that can be required, though one suppose a divine Author had made them : here is nothing in the work itself, unworthy of so great a Master : here are no internal arguments from the subject against the truth of that supposition. Have we then any capacity to judge and distinguish what is the effect of chance, and what is made by art and wisdom ? when a medal is dug out of the ground, with some Roman Emperor's image upon it, and an inscription that agrees to his titles and history, and an impress upon the reverse relating to some memorable occurrence in his life ; can we be sure, that this medal was really coined by an artificer, or is but a product of the soil from whence it was taken, that might casually or naturally receive that texture and figure ; as many kinds of fossils are very oddly and elegantly shaped according to the modification of their constituent salts, or the cavities they were formed in ? Is it a matter of doubt and controversy, whether the pillar of Trajan or Antoninus, the ruins of Persepolis, or the late temple of Minerva, were the designs and works of architecture ; or perhaps might originally exist so, or be raised up in an earthquake by subterraneous vapour ?

vapour? Do not we all think ourselves infallibly certain, that this or that very commodious house must needs have been built by human art; though perhaps a natural cave in a rock may have something not much unlike to parlours or chambers? And yet he must be a mere idiot, that cannot discern more strokes and characters of workmanship in the structure of an animal (in an human body especially) than in the most elegant medal or edifice in the world. They will believe the first parents of mankind to have been fortuitously formed without wisdom or art; and that for this sorry reason, because it is not simply *impossible* but that they may have been formed so. And who can demonstrate (if chance be once admitted of) but that *possibly* all the inscriptions and other remains of antiquity may be mere *lusus naturæ*, and not works of human artifice? If this be good reasoning, let us no longer make any pretences to judgment or a faculty of discerning between things probable and improbable; for, except flat contradictions, we may upon equal reasons believe all things or nothing at all. And do the Atheists thus argue in common matters of life? Would they have mankind lie idle, and lay aside all care of provisions by agriculture or commerce, because possibly the dis-

diffolution of the world may happen the next moment? ^k Had Dinocrates really carved mount Athos into a statue of Alexander the Great, and had the memory of the fact been obliterated by some accident, who could afterwards have proved it impossible but that it might casually have been formed so? For every mountain must have some determinate figure, and why then not an human one, as possibly as another? And yet I suppose none could have seriously believed so, upon this bare account of possibility. It is an opinion that generally obtains among philosophers, that there is but one common matter, which is diversified by accidents; and the same numerical quantity of it, by variation of texture, may constitute successively all kinds of bodies in the world. So that it is not absolutely impossible, but that, if you take any other matter of equal weight and substance with the body of a man, you may blend it so long till it be shuffled into human shape and an organical structure. But who is he so abandoned to sottish credulity, as to think, upon that principle, that a clod of earth in a sack may ever by eternal shaking receive the fabric of man's body? And yet this is very near akin; nay, it

^k — dictis dabit ipsa fidem res

Forſitan, et graviter terrarum motibus orbis

Omnia conquaſſari in parvo tempore cernes. *Lucret. lib. v.*

is exactly parallel to the reasoning of Atheists about fortuitous production. If mere possibility be a good foundation for belief; even Lucian's true history may be *true* upon that account, and ¹Palæphatus's tales may be *credible* in spite of the title.

It hath been excellently well urged in this case, both by ancients and moderns, that to attribute such admirable structures to blind fortune or chance, is no less than to suppose, that, if innumerable figures of the twenty-four letters be cast abroad at random, they might constitute in due order the whole ^m*Æneis* of Virgil or the *Annales* of Ennius. Now the Atheists may pretend to elude this comparison; as if the case was not fairly stated. For herein we first make an idea of a particular poem; and then demand, if chance can possibly describe that: and so we conceive man's body thus actually formed, and then affirm that it exceeds the power of chance to constitute a being like that: which, they may say, is to expect imitation from chance, and not simple production. But at the first beginning of things there was no copy to be followed, nor any preexistent form of human bodies to be imitated: so that, to put the case fairly, we

¹ Palæph. Περὶ Ἀπίστων, De Incredibilibus.

^m Cicero de Natura Deorum, lib. ii. cap. 37.

should

should strip our minds and fancies from any particular notion and idea of a living body or a poem ; and then we shall understand, that what shape and structure soever should be at first casually formed, so that it could live and propagate, might be man ; and whatsoever should result from the shewing of those loose letters, that made any sense and measures, might be the poem we seek for.

To which we reply, that if we should allow them, that there was no preexistent idea of human nature, till it was actually formed, (for the idea of man in the divine intellect must not now be considered,) yet because they declare, that great multitudes of each species of animals did fortuitously emerge out of the soil in distant countries and climates ; what could that be less than imitation in blind chance, to make many individuals of one species so exactly alike ? Nay, though they should now, to cross us and evade the force of the argument, desert their ancient doctrine, and derive all sorts of animals from single originals of each kind, which should be the common parents of all the race ; yet surely even

^a Hinc ubi quæque loci regio opportuna dabatur,

Crescebant uteri, &c.

Lucret. lib. v.

Et ibidem,

——inde loci mortalia sæcla creavit,

Multa modis multis varia ratione coorta.

in this account they must necessarily allow two at least, male and female, in every species: which chance could neither make so very nearly alike, without copying and imitation: nor so usefully differing, without contrivance and wisdom. So that, let them take whether they will, if they deduce all animals from single pairs of a sort, even to make the second of a pair, is to write after a copy; it is, in the former comparison, by the casting of loose letters to compose the preexistent particular poem of Ennius. But, if they make numerous sons and daughters of earth among every species of creatures, as all their authors have supposed, this is not only, as was said before, to believe a monkey may once scribble the *Leviathan* of Hobbes, but may do the same frequently by an habitual kind of chance.

Let us consider, how next to impossible it is, that chance (if there were such a thing) should in such an immense variety of parts in an animal twice hit upon the same structure, so as to make a male and female. Let us resume the former instance of the twenty-four letters thrown at random upon the ground. It is a mathematical demonstration, that these twenty-four, do admit of so many changes in their order, ° that they may make such a

° Tacqueti Arithmet. cap. de Progressione.

long roll of differently ranged alphabets, not two of which are alike, that they could not all be exhausted, though a million million of writers should each write above a thousand alphabets a day for the space of a million million of years. What strength of imagination can extend itself to embrace and comprehend such a prodigious diversity? And it is as infallibly certain, that suppose any particular order of the alphabet be assigned, and the twenty-four letters be cast at a venture, so as to fall in a line; it is so many million of millions odds to one against any single throw, that the assigned order will not be cast. Let us now suppose, there be only a thousand constituent members in the body of a man, (that we may take few enough,) it is plain that the different position and situation of these thousand parts would make so many differing compounds and distinct species of animals. And if only twenty-four parts, as before, may be so multifariously placed and ordered as to make many millions of millions of differing rows; in the supposition of a thousand parts, how immense must that capacity of variation be! even beyond all thought and denomination, to be expressed only in mute figures, whose multiplied powers are beyond the narrowness of language, and drown the imagination in astonishment and confusion: especially, if we observe, that the

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variety

variety of the alphabet considered above was in mere longitude only ; but the thousand parts of our bodies may be diversified by situation in all the dimensions of solid bodies ; which multiplies all over and over again, and overwhelms the fancy in a new abyss of unfathomable number. Now it is demonstratively certain, that it is all this odds to one, against any particular trial, that no one man could by casual production be framed like another ; (as the Atheists suppose thousands to be in several regions of the earth ;) and I think it is rather more odds than less, that no one female could be added to a male, inasmuch as that most necessary difference of sex is a higher token of divine wisdom and skill, above all the power of fortuitous hits, than the very similitude of both sexes in the other parts of the body. And *again*, we must consider, that the vast imparity of this odds against the accidental likeness of two casual formations is never lessened and diminished by trying and casting. It is above a hundred to one against any particular throw, that you do not cast any given set of faces with four cubical dice, because there are so many several combinations of the six faces of four dice. Now, after you have cast all the hundred trials but one, it is still as much odds at the last remaining time, as it was at the first : for blind insensible chance cannot grow cunning

cunning by many experiments ; neither have the preceding casts any influence upon those that come after. So that if this chance of the Atheists should have essayed in vain to make a species for a million million of ages, it is still as many millions odds against that formation, as it was at the first moment in the beginning of things. How incredible is it therefore, that it should hit upon two productions alike, P within so short duration of the world, according to the doctrine of our Atheists ? How much more, that it should do so within the compass of a hundred years, and of a small tract of ground, so that this male and female might come together ? If any Atheist can be induced to stake his soul for a wager, against such an inexhaustible disproportion ; let him never hereafter accuse others of easiness and credulity.

(4.) But, fourthly, we will still make more ample concessions, and suppose with the Atheist, that his chance has actually formed all animals in their terrestrial wombs. Let us see now, how he will preserve them to maturity of birth. What climate will he cherish them in, that they be not inevitably destroyed by moisture or cold ? Where is that equability of

¶ Verum, ut opinor, habet novitatem summa, recensque
Natura 'st mundi neque pridem exordia cepit.

Lucret. v. 331.

nine months warmth to be found? that uniform warmth, which is so necessary even in the incubation of birds, much more in the time of gestation of viviparous animals. I know, his party have placed this great scene in ⁹ Egypt, or somewhere between the two tropics. Now, not to mention the cool of the nights, which alone would destroy the conceptions; it is known that all those countries have either incessant rains every year for whole months together, or are quite laid under water by floods from the higher grounds; which would certainly corrupt and putrefy all the teeming wombs of the earth, and extinguish the whole brood of *embryons* by untimely abortions.

(5.) But, fifthly, we will still be more obliging to this Atheist, and grant him his petition, that nature may bring forth the young infants vitally into the world. Let us see now what sustenance, what nurses he hath provided for them. If we consider the present constitution of nature, we must affirm, that most species must have been lost for want of fostering and feeding. It is a great mistake, that man only comes weak and helpless into the world; whereas it is apparent, that excepting fish and insects, (and not all of them neither,) there are very

⁹ Cefalpin. Berigard.

few or no creatures, that can provide for themselves at first without the assistance of parents. So that unless they suppose mother earth to be a great animal, and to have nurtured up her young offspring with a conscious tenderness and providential care, there is no possible help for it, but they must have been doubly starved both with hunger and cold.

(6.) But, sixthly, we will be yet more civil to this Atheist, and forgive him this difficulty also. Let us suppose the first animals maintained themselves with food, though we cannot tell how. But then what security hath he made for the preservation of human race from the jaws of ravenous beasts? The divine writers have acquainted us, that God at the beginning gave mankind *dominion* (an impressed awe and authority) *‘over every living thing that moveth upon the earth*. But in the Atheist’s hypothesis there are no imaginable means of defence: for it is manifest, that so many beasts of prey, lions, tigers, wolves, and the like, being of the same age with man, and arriving at the top of their strength in one year or two, must needs have worried and devoured those forlorn brats of our Atheists, even before they were weaned from the *‘foramina terræ*, or at least in a short

* Gen. i. 28.

* Lucret. lib. v.

time

time after ; since all the carnivorous animals should have multiplied exceedingly by several generations, before those children that escaped at first could come to the age of puberty. So that men would always lessen, and their enemies always increase.

But some of them will here pretend, that Epicurus was out in this matter ; and that they were not born mere infants out of those wombs of the earth, but men at their full growth, and in the prime of their strength. But, I pray, what should hinder those grown lusty infants from breaking sooner those membranes that involved them ; as the shell of the egg is broken by the bird, and the *amnion* by the *fœtus* ? Were the membranes so thick and tough, that the *fœtus* must stay there till he had teeth to eat through them, as young maggots do through a gall ? *But let us answer these fools according to their folly.* Let us grant, that they were born with beards, and in the full time of manhood. They are not yet in a better condition ; here are still many enemies against few, many *species* against one ; and those enemies speedily multiplying in the second and third and much lower generations ; whereas the sons of the first men must have a tedious time of childhood and adolescence, before they can either themselves assist their parents, or
encou-

encourage them with new hopes of posterity, And we must consider withal, that (in the notion of atheism) those savages were not then, what civilized mankind is now ; but *mutum et turpe pecus*, without language, without mutual society, without arms of offence, without houses or fortifications ; an obvious and exposed prey to the ravage of devouring beasts ; a most sorry and miserable plantation towards the peopling of a world.

And now, that I have followed the Atheists through so many dark mazes of error and extravagance, having to my knowledge omitted nothing on their side that looks like a difficulty, nor proposed any thing in reply but what I myself really believe to be a just and solid answer ; I shall here close up the Apostle's argument of the existence of God from the consideration of human nature. And I appeal to all sober and impartial judges of what hath been delivered, whether those noble faculties of our souls may be only a mere sound and echo from the clashing of senseless atoms, or rather indubitably must proceed from a spiritual substance of a heavenly and divine extraction ? Whether these admirable fabrics of our bodies shall be ascribed to the fatal motions or fortuitous shufflings of blind matter ;
or

or rather, beyond controverfy, to the wisdom and contrivance of the almighty Author of all things, *who is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working ?* To whom, &c.

^t *Isaiah xxviii. 29.*

A CONFUTATION OF ATHEISM

FROM THE
ORIGIN AND FRAME OF THE WORLD.

PART I.

SERMON VI.

Preached October the 3d, 1692.

ACTS xiv. 15—17.

That ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, who made heaven and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein: who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways. Nevertheless, he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.

ALL the arguments that can be brought, or can be demanded, for the existence of God, may, perhaps not absurdly, be reduced to three general heads: the first of which will include all the proofs from the vital and intelligent portions of the universe, the organical bodies of the various animals, and the immaterial souls of men.

men. Which living and understanding substances, as they make incomparably the most considerable and noble part of the naturally known and visible creation; so they do the most clearly and cogently demonstrate to philosophical enquirers the necessary self-existence, and omnipotent power, and unsearchable wisdom, and boundless beneficence of their Maker. This first topic therefore was very fitly and divinely made use of by our Apostle in his conference with philosophers and that inquisitive people of Athens: the latter *ⁱ spending their time in nothing else, but either to tell or hear some new thing*; and the other, in nothing, but to call in question the most evident truths that were delivered and received of old. And these arguments we have hitherto pursued in their utmost latitude and extent. So that now we shall proceed to the second head, or the proofs of a Deity from the inanimate part of the world; since even natural reason, as well as holy Scripture, assures us, *ⁱ that the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handy-work*; *ⁱ that he made the earth by his power, he hath established the world by his wisdom, and hath stretched out the heaven by his understanding*; *ⁱ that he commanded, and they were created*; he hath

ⁱ Chap. xvii. 2. *ⁱ* Psal. xix. 1. *ⁱ* Jer. li. 15. *ⁱ* Psal. cxlviii. 5, 6.

also established them for ever and ever; ° he covereth the heaven with clouds, he prepareth rain for the earth, † he crowneth the year with his goodness.

These reasons for God's existence, from the frame and system of the world, as they are equally true with the former, so they have always been more popular and plausible to the illiterate part of mankind; insomuch as the § Epicureans, and some others, have observed, that men's contemplating the most ample arch of the firmament, the innumerable multitude of the stars, the regular rising and setting of the sun, the periodical and constant vicissitudes of day and night, and seasons of the year, and the other affections of meteors and heavenly bodies, was the principal and almost only ground and occasion that the notion of a God came first into the world: making no mention of the former proof from the frame

° Psal. cxlvii. 8.

† Psal. lxxv. 11.

§ Præterea, cœli rationes ordine certo,

Et varia annorum cernebant tempora vèrti. Lucret. v. 1182.

Nam bene qui didicere Deos securum agere ævum,

Sì tamen interea mirantur, &c.

Id. vi. 57.

Quis hunc hominem dixerit, qui cum tam certos cœli motus, tam ratos astrorum ordines, &c. Cic. de Nat. Deor. lib. ii. *Θεὸς γὰρ ἵστοιαι ἔσχοι ἀπὸ τῶν φαινομένων ἀστέρων, ὁρῶντες τούτους μεγάλης συμφωνίας ὄντας αἰτίας, καὶ τεταγμένας ἡμέραν τε καὶ νύκτα, χειμῶνά τε καὶ θέρους, αἰατολάς τε καὶ δυσμᾶς.* Plutarch. de Plac. Phil. i. 6.

of human nature, *that in God we live, and move, and have our being.* Which argument being so natural and internal to mankind, doth nevertheless (I know not how) seem more remote and obscure to the generality of men; who are readier to fetch a reason from the immense distance of the starry heavens and the outmost walls of the world, than seek one at home, within themselves, in their own faculties and constitutions. So that hence we may perceive how prudently that was waved, and the second here insisted on by St. Paul to the rude and simple semi-barbarians of Lycaonia: *he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.* Which words we shall now interpret in a large and free acceptance; so that this *second* theme may comprehend all the brute inanimate matter of the universe, as the *former* comprised all visible creatures in the world, that have understanding, or sense, or vegetable life. These two arguments are the voices of nature, the unanimous suffrages of all real beings and substances created, that are naturally knowable without revelation. And if, lastly, in the *third* place, we can evince the divine existence from the adjuncts and circumstances of human life; if we find in all ages, in all civilized nations, an universal belief

belief and worship of a divinity ; if we find many unquestionable records of supernatural and miraculous effects ; if we find many faithful relations of prophecies punctually accomplished ; of prophecies so well attested, above the suspicion of falsehood ; so remote, and particular, and unlikely to come to pass, beyond the possibility of good guessing, or the mere foresight of human wisdom ; if we find a most warrantable tradition, that *at sundry times and in divers manners God spake unto mankind by his Prophets, and by his Son, and his Apostles*, who have delivered to us in sacred writings a clearer revelation of his divine nature and will : if, I say, this third topic from human testimony be found agreeable to the standing vote and attestation of nature, what further proofs can be demanded or desired ? What fuller evidence can our adversaries require, since all the classes of known beings are summoned to appear ? Would they have us bring more witnesses than the all of the world ? and will they not stand to the grand verdict and determination of the universe ? They are incurable infidels, that persist to deny a Deity ; when all creatures in the world, as well spiritual as corporeal, all from human race to the lowest of insects, *from the cedar of Libanus to the moss upon the wall*, from the vast globes of the sun and planets to the smallest particles of dust, do declare their

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absolute

absolute dependence upon the first author and fountain of all being, and motion, and life, the only eternal and self-existent God; with whom inhabit all majesty, and wisdom, and goodness, for ever and ever.

But, before I enter upon this argument from the origin and frame of the world; it will not be amiss to premise some particulars that may serve for an illustration of the text, and be a proper introduction to the following discourses.

As the Apostles, Barnabas and Paul, were preaching the Gospel at ^h Lystra, a city of Lycaonia in Asia the Less, among the rest of their auditors there was a lame cripple from his birth, whom Paul commanded with a loud voice, *to stand upright on his feet*; and immediately by a miraculous energy *he leaped and walked*. Let us compare the present circumstances with those of my former text, and observe the remarkable difference in the Apostle's proceedings. No question but there were several cripples at Athens, so very large and populous a city; and, if that could be dubious, I might add, that the very climate disposed the inhabitants to impotency in the feet: ⁱ *Atthide tentantur gressus, oculique in Achæis Finibus*—are the words of Lucretius; which it is probable

^h Acts xiv. 8.

ⁱ Lucret. lib. vi.

he transcribed from Epicurus, a Gargettian and native of Athens, and therefore an unquestionable evidence in a matter of this nature. Neither is it likely that all the Athenian cripples should escape the sight of St. Paul, ^k since *he disputed there in the market daily with them that met him*. How comes it to pass then, that we do not hear of a like miracle in that city; which one would think might have greatly conduced to the Apostle's design, and have converted, or at least confuted and put to silence, the Epicureans and Stoics? But it is not difficult to give an account of this seeming disparity, if we attend to the qualifications of the lame person at Lystra; whom Paul stedfastly beholding, and ^l *perceiving that he had FAITH to be healed, said with a loud voice, Stand upright on thy feet*. This is the necessary condition that was always required by our Saviour and his Apostles: ^m *And Jesus said unto the blind man, Receive thy sight, thy FAITH hath saved thee*; and to the woman that had the issue of blood, ⁿ *Daughter, be of good comfort; thy FAITH hath made thee whole: go in peace*. It was want of FAITH in our Saviour's countrymen, which hindered him from shedding among them the salutary emanations of his divine virtue: ^o *And he did not many mighty works there,*

^k Ver. 17.^l Ver. 9.^m Luke xviii. 42. •ⁿ Luke viii. 48.

• Matt. xiii. 58.

because of their unbelief. There were many diseased persons in his own country, but very few that were rightly disposed for a supernatural cure. St. Mark hath a very observable expression upon the same occasion: *P And he COULD do no mighty works there, save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them.* Καὶ ἐν ΗΑΤΝΑΤΟ. ἐνταῦθα ἐδεδείκναι δύναμιν πείρασ. We read in St. Luke, ch. v. 17. *And the POWER (δύναμις) of the Lord was present to heal them.* And, chap. vi. ver. 19. *And the whole multitude sought to touch him: for there went virtue (δύναμις) out of him, and healed them all.* Now since δύναμις and ἡδύνατο are words of the same root and signification, shall we so interpret the Evangelist, as if our Saviour had not *power* to work miracles among his unbelieving countrymen? This is the passage which that impious and impure Atheist † Lucilio Vanino singled out for his text in his pretended and mock apology for the Christian religion; wickedly insinuating, as if the prodigies of Christ were mere impostures and acted by confederacy: and therefore, where the spectators were incredulous, and consequently watchful and suspicious, and not easily imposed on, he COULD do no mighty work there; there his arm was shortened, and his

† Mark vi. 5.

† Vanini Dial. p. 439.

power

power and virtue too feeble for such supernatural effects. But the gross absurdity of this suggestion is no less conspicuous than the villainous blasphemy of it. For, can it be credible to any rational person, that St. Mark could have that meaning? that he should tax his Lord and Saviour, whom he knew to be God Almighty, with deficiency of power? He *could* do no mighty works; that is, he *would* do none, because of their unbelief. There is a frequent change of those words in all languages of the world. And we may appeal with * St. Chrysostom to the common custom of speech, whatever country we live in. This therefore is the genuine sense of that expression; Christ *would* not heal their infirmities, because of the hardness and slowness of their hearts, in that they believed him not. And I think there is not one instance in all the history of the New Testament of a miracle done for any one's sake, that did not believe Jesus to be a good person, and sent from God; and had not a disposition of heart fit to receive his doctrine. * For to believe he was the Messiah and Son of God, was not then absolutely necessary, nor rigidly exacted; the most signal of

* Chrys. ad locum: τὸτο δὲ καὶ ἐν κοινῇ συνήθειᾳ φησιν ὁ μαρτυροῦν ὅτι τις ἄν. So δύναμαι is *volo*, Acts iv. 20. John vii. 7. and θέλω is *possum*. Vid. Budæi Comm. Lat. Gr.

* See John, ch. ix. and Matth. xvi. 14.

the prophecies being not yet fulfilled by him, till his passion and resurrection. But, as I said, to obtain a miracle from him, it was necessary to believe him a good person, and sent from God. ^t Herod therefore hoped in vain *to have seen some miracle done by him* : ^u and when *the Pharisees sought of him a sign from heaven, tempting him*, they received this disappointing answer, *Verily I say unto you, There shall no sign be given to this generation*. And we may observe in the Gospels, that where the persons themselves were incapable of actual faith ; ^x yet the friends and relations of those dead that were raised again to life, of those lunatics and demoniacs that were restored to their right minds, were such as *sought after him and believed on him*. ^y And, as to the healing of Malchus's ear, it was a peculiar and extraordinary case : for, though the person was wholly unworthy of so gracious a cure, yet in the account of the meek Lamb of God it was a kind of injury done to him by the fervidness of St. Peter, who knew not yet what spirit he was of, and that his Master's kingdom was not of this world. But, besides this obvious meaning of the words of the Evangelist, there may perhaps be a sublimer sense couched under the expression. For in the divine nature *will* and

^t Luke xxiii. 8.

^u Mark viii. 11, 12.

^x Matt. xvii. 15. xv. 22. Luke viii. 4.

^y Luke xxii. 52.

can

can are frequently the selfsame thing; and freedom and necessity, that are opposites here below, do in heaven above most amicably agree and join hands together. And this is not a restraint or impotency, but the royal prerogative of the most absolute King of Kings; that he *wills* to do nothing but what he *can*, and that he *can* do nothing which is repugnant to his divine wisdom and essential goodness. God *cannot* do what is unjust, nor say what is untrue, nor promise with a mind to deceive. Our Saviour therefore *could* do no mighty work in a country of unbelievers, because it was not fit and reasonable. And so we may say of our Apostle, who was acted by the Spirit of God; that he *could* do no miracle at Athens, and that because of their *unbelief*. There is a very sad and melancholy account of the success of his stay there. ² *Howbeit CERTAIN men clave unto him, and believed*; a more diminutive expression, than if they had been called *a few*. And we do not find, that he ever visited this city again, as he did several others, where there were a competent number of disciples. And indeed if we consider the genius and condition of the Athenians at that time, how vicious and corrupt they were; how conceited of their own wit, and science, and politeness, as if they had

² Τινες δὲ ἄρχουσιν, ch. xvii. ver. 34.

invented corn and oil, and distributed them to the world; ^a and had first taught civility, and learning; and religion, and laws to the rest of mankind; how they were puffed up with the fulsome flatteries of their philosophers, and sophists, and poets of the stage; we cannot much wonder, that they should so little regard an unknown stranger, that preached unto them *an unknown God*.

I am aware of an objection, that, for ought we can now affirm, St. Paul might have done several miracles at Athens, though they be not related by St. Luke. I confess I am far from asserting, that all the ^b miracles of our Saviour are recorded in the Gospels, or of his Apostles in the Acts. But nevertheless, in the present circumstances, I think we may conjecture, that, if any prodigy and wonder had been performed by our Apostle among those curious and pragmatical Athenians, it would have had such a consequence, as might have deserved some place in sacred history, as well as this before us at Lystra; ^c where, *when the people saw what Paul had done, they lift up their voices, saying in the speech of Lycaonia, The gods are come*

^a Cicero pro Flacco. Adfunt Athenienses, unde humanitas, doctrina, religio, fruges, jura, leges ortæ atque in omnes terras distributæ putantur. Isoc. Paneg. Diod. Sic. 13.

^b See John xxi. 25. and 2 Cor. xii. 12.

^c Acts xiv. 11.

down

down to us in the likeness of men; and the priests came with oxen and garlands, and would have sacrificed to them, as to Jupiter and Mercurius. That this was a common opinion among the Gentiles, that the gods sometimes assumed human shape, and conversed upon earth as strangers and travellers, must needs be well known to any one that ever looks into the ancient poets. Even the vagabond life of Apollonius Tyanensis shall be called by a bigoted sophist, ^d ἐπιδημία ἐς ἀνθρώπους θεῶν, a peregrination of a god among men. And when the Lyftrians say, ὁμοιωθέντες ἀνθρώποις, *gods in the shape of men*, they mean not, that the gods had other figure than human even in heaven itself, (for that was the received doctrine of most of the vulgar heathen, and of some sects of philosophers too,) but that they, who in their own nature were of a more august stature and glorious visage, had now contracted and debased themselves into the narrower dimensions and meaner aspects of mortal men. Now, when the Apostles heard of this intended sacrifice, ^e *they rent their clothes, and ran in among the people, crying out, &c.* St. Chrysostom upon this place hath a very odd exposition. He enquires why Paul and Barnabas do now at last reprove the people, when

^d Eunapius, cap. ii.^e Acts xiv. 14.

the

the priest and victims were even at the gates ; and not presently, when they lift up their voice, and called them gods : for which he assigns this reason, ^fthat because they spoke *Λυκαονισί*, in the *Lycaonian tongue*, the Apostles did not then understand them ; but now they perceived their meaning by the oxen and the garlands. Indeed it is very probable, that the Lycaonian language was very different from the Greek, as we may gather from ^gEphorus, and Strabo that cites him, who make almost all the inland nations of Asia Minor to be barbarians ; and from ^hStephanus Byzantius, who acquaints us, that ἄρκουρος, a juniper-tree, was called δέλαια in the speech of the Lycaonians, ἐν τῇ τῶν Λυκαόνων φωνῇ. But, notwithstanding we can by no means allow that the great Apostle of the Gentiles should be ignorant of that language ; he that so solemnly affirms of himself, ⁱ*I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than you all* ; and at the first effusion of this heavenly gift, ^k*the dwellers in Cappadocia, in Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia*, (some of them near

^f Ἄλλ' ἔτι καὶ τὸ αὐτὸ ἔδειξε δῆλον, τῇ γὰρ οἰκίᾳ φωνῇ ἰφθίγγοντο· διὰ τοῦτο ἔδιν αὐτοῖς ἔλεγον, ἰσχυρὰ δὲ εἶδον τὰ σέμματα, τότε ἐξελθόντες διέβησαν τὰ ἱμάτια αὐτῶν. Chrys. ad loc.

^g Ephorus apud Strab. lib. xiv.

^h Steph. voce Δέλαια.

ⁱ 1 Cor. xiv. 18.

^k Acts ii.

neigh-

neighbours to the Lycaonians,) *heard the Apostles speak in their several tongues the wonderful works of God.* And how could these two Apostles have preached the Gospel to the ^lLystrians, if they did not use the common language of the country? And to what purpose did they ^m*cry out* and speak to them, if the hearers could not apprehend? or how could they by those ⁿ*sayings restrain the people* from sacrificing, if what they said was not intelligible? But it will be asked, why then were the Apostles so slow and backward in reclaiming them? and what can be answered to the query of St. Chrysostom? When I consider the circumstances and nature of this affair, I am persuaded they did not hear that discourse of the people. For I can hardly conceive, that men under such apprehensions as the Lystrians then were, in the dread presence and under the very nod of the almighty Jupiter, not an idol of wood or stone, but the real and very God, (as the ^oAthenians made their compliment to Demetrius Poliorcetes,) should exclaim in his sight and hearing: this, I say, seems not probable nor natural; nor is it affirmed in the text: ^pbut they might buzz and

^l Acts xiv. 7.

^m Ver. 15.

ⁿ Ver. 18.

^o Οὐ ξύλινον, ἐδὲ λίθινον, ἀλλ' ἀληθινόν. Athenæus vi. 15.

^p Ὅτι δὲ τις εἴπεται ἰδὼν ἐς πλεῖστοις ἄλλοι.

whisper

whisper it one to another, and silently withdrawing from the presence of the Apostles, they then *lift up their voices*, and noised it about the city. So that Paul and Barnabas were but just then informed of their idolatrous design, when they rent their clothes, and ran in among them, and expostulated with them; *¶ Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you*; ὁμοιοπαθεῖς ὑμῖν, *¶ mortal men like yourselves*, as it is judiciously rendered in the ancient Latin version; otherwise the *antithesis* is not so plain: for the heathen theology made even the gods themselves subject to human passions and appetites, to anger, sorrow, lust, hunger, wounds, lameness, &c. *¶ and exempted them from nothing but death and old age: and we preach unto you, that ye should turn from these vanities* (i. e. idols) *unto the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein: who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways*: πάντα τὰ ἔθνη, *not all nations, but all the heathen*, (the word HEATHEN comes from ἔθνη,) *¶ all the Gentiles*, distin-

¶ Acts xiv. 15.

¶ Mortales sumus similes vobis homines. So Εἴτι πάθω, *If I die*, a common expression in Greek writers.

¶ ————— αἱ γὰρ ἵγν' ὡς

Εἴην ἀθάνατος καὶ ἀγήραος ἡμᾶτα πάντα. Hom.

¶ See Acts iv. 27. xiv. 5. xxvi. 17. Gal. ii. 14.

guished

guished from the Jews, as the same words are translated Rom. xv. 11. and 2 Tim. iv. 17. and ought to have been so, Rom. i. 3. and xvi. 26. but much more in our text, which, according to the present version, seems to carry a very obscure, if not erroneous meaning; but by a true interpretation is very easy and intelligible: that hitherto God had suffered all the Gentiles to walk in their own ways; and excepting the Jews only, whom he chose for his own people, and prescribed them a law, he permitted the rest of mankind to walk by the mere light of nature without the assistance of revelation: but that now, in the fulness of time, he had even to the Gentiles also *sent salvation, and opened the door of faith, and granted repentance unto life.* So that these words of our Apostle are exactly coincident with that remarkable passage in his discourse to the Athenians: "*And the (past) times of this ignorance: (of the Gentile world) God winked at, (or* ^x *overlooked;)* *but now commandeth all men, every where to repent. And nevertheless, says* our text, even in that gloomy state of heathenism, *he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, ἀγαθοποιῶν ἐξ οὐρανόσ, always doing good from heaven, (y* *which seems to be the*

^a Acts xvii. 30.

^x ὡς περὶ οὐρανόν.

^y בד עבד הוא לחון שבתא מן שמיא ומחות משרא. So that they read

genuine punctuation, and is authorized by the Syriac interpreters,) *and gave us rain and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.* Even the very Gentiles might *feel after him and find him*; since the admirable frame of *heaven, and earth, and sea*, and the munificent provision of *food* and sustenance for his creatures, did competently set forth his eternal power and Godhead; so that stupid idolaters and profane Atheists were then and always without excuse.

Our adversaries have used the same methods to elude the present argument from the frame of the world, as they have done to evade the former from the origin of mankind. *Some* have maintained, that this world hath thus existed from all eternity in its present form and condition; but *others* say, that the forms of particular worlds are generable and corruptible; so that our present system cannot have sustained an infinite duration already gone and expired: but however, say they, body in general, the common *basis* and matter of all worlds and beings, is self-existent and eternal; which being naturally divided into innumerable little particles or atoms, eternally endued with an ingenite and inseparable power of mo-

read ἀγαθοποιῶν ἐξ οὐρανοῦ, καὶ ὑπερὶ δ. Horat. Nec siquid miri
faciat natura, Deos id tristes ex alto cœli demittere testō.

tion,

tion, by their omnifarious concursions, and combinations, and coalitions, produce successively (or at once, if matter be infinite) an infinite number of worlds; and amongst the rest there arose this visible complex system of heaven and earth. And thus far they do agree; but then they differ about the cause and mode of the production of worlds, some ascribing it to fortune, and others to mechanism or nature. It is true, the astrological Atheists will give us no trouble in the present dispute; because they cannot form a peculiar *hypothesis* here, as they have done before about the origination of animals. For though some of them are so vain and senseless, as to pretend to a *thema mundi*, a calculated scheme of the nativity of our world; yet it exceeds even their absurdity, to suppose the zodiac and planets to be efficient of, and antecedent to themselves; or to exert any influences before they were in being. So that, to refute all possible explications that the Atheists have or can propose, I shall proceed in this following method:

I. First, I will prove it impossible that the primary parts of our world, the sun and the planets, with their regular motions and revolutions, should have subsisted eternally in the present or a like frame and condition.

II. Secondly, I will shew, that matter abstractly

strictly and absolutely considered, cannot have subsisted eternally ; or, if it has, yet motion cannot have coexisted eternally with it, as an inherent property and essential attribute of the Atheist's god, MATTER.

III. Thirdly, though universal matter should have endured from everlasting, divided into infinite particles in the Epicurean way ; and though motion should have been coeval and coeternal with it ; yet those particles or atoms could never of themselves by omnifarious kinds of motion, whether fortuitous or mechanical, have fallen or been disposed into this or a like visible system.

IV. And, fourthly, *a posteriori*, that the order and beauty of the inanimate parts of the world, the discernible ends and final causes of them, the τὸ βελτίον, or a meliority above what was necessary to be, do evince by a reflex argument, that it is the product and workmanship, not of blind mechanism or blinder chance, but of an intelligent and benign Agent ; *who by his excellent wisdom made the heavens and earth, and gives rain and fruitful seasons for the service of man.*

I shall speak to the two first propositions in my present discourse ; reserving the latter for other opportunities.

I. First,

I. First, therefore : that the present or a like frame of the world hath not subsisted from everlasting. We will readily concede, that a thing may be truly eternal, though its duration be terminated at one end. For so we affirm human souls to be immortal and eternal, though *ἦν ὅτι ἐκ ἧσαν*, there was a time when they were nothing ; and therefore their infinite duration will always be bounded at one extreme by that first beginning of existence. So that, for ought appears as yet, the revolutions of the earth and other planets about the sun, though they be limited at one end by the present revolution, may nevertheless have been infinite and eternal without any beginning. But then we must consider, that this duration of human souls is only *potentially* infinite. For their eternity consists only in an endless capacity of continuance without ever ceasing to be, in a boundless futurity that can never be exhausted, or all of it be past and present. But their duration can never be *positively* and *actually* eternal ; because it is most manifest, that no moment can ever be assigned, wherein it shall be true, that such a soul hath then actually sustained an infinite duration. For that supposed infinite duration will by the very supposition be limited at two extremes, though never so remote asunder, and consequently must needs be finite. Wherefore the true nature and no-

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tion of a soul's eternity is this : that the future moments of its duration can never be all *past and present*, but still there will be a futurity and potentiality of more for ever and ever. So that we evidently perceive from this instance, that whatever successive duration shall be bounded at one end, and be all *past and present*, for that reason must be finite. Which necessarily evinceth, that the present or a like world can never have been eternal ; or that there cannot have been infinite past revolutions of a planet about a sun. For this supposed infinity is terminate at one extreme by the *present* revolution, and all the other revolutions are confessedly past ; so that the whole duration is bounded at one end, and all *past and present* ; and therefore cannot have been infinite, by what was proved before. And this will shew us the vast difference between the false successive eternity backwards, and the real one to come. For, consider the *present* revolution of the earth, as the bound and confine of them both. God Almighty, if he so pleaseth, may continue this motion to perpetuity in infinite revolutions to come ; because futurity is inexhaustible, and can never be all spent or run out by *past and present* moments. But then, if we look backwards from this present revolution, we may apprehend the impossibility of infinite revolutions
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on that side; because all are already *past*, and so were once actually *present*, and consequently are finite, by the argument before. For surely we cannot conceive a preteriteness (if I may say so) still backwards *in infinitum*, that never was present; as we can an endless futurity, that never will be present. So that though one is potentially infinite; yet nevertheless the other is actually finite. And this reasoning doth necessarily conclude against the past infinite duration of all successive motion and mutable beings: but it doth not at all affect the eternal existence of God, in whose invariable nature there is no past or future; who is omnipresent not only as to space, but as to duration, and, with respect to such omnipresence, it is certain and manifest, that succession and motion are mere impossibilities, and repugnant in the very terms.

And, secondly, though what hath been now said hath given us so clear a view of the nature of successive duration, as to make more arguments needless; yet I shall here briefly shew, how our adversaries' hypothesis without any outward opposition destroys and confutes itself. For let us suppose infinite revolutions of the earth about the sun to be already gone and expired; I take it to be self-evident, that, if none of those past revolutions has been infinite ages ago, all the revolutions put together

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cannot

cannot make the duration of infinite ages : it follows therefore from this supposition, that there may be some one assignable revolution among them, that was at an infinite distance from the present. But it is self-evident likewise, that no one past revolution could be infinitely distant from the present : for then an infinite or unbounded duration may be bounded at two extremes by two annual revolutions ; which is absurd and a contradiction. And again, upon the same supposition of an eternal past duration of the world, and of infinite annual revolutions of the earth about the sun ; I would ask concerning the monthly revolutions of the moon about the earth, or the diurnal ones of the earth upon its own axis, both which by the very hypothesis are coeval with the former ; whether these also have been finite or infinite ? Not finite to be sure ; because then a finite number would be greater than an infinite, as 12 or 365 are more than an unit. Nor infinite neither ; for then two or three infinities would exceed one another ; as a year exceeds a month, or both exceed a day. So that both ways the supposition is repugnant and impossible.

²And, thirdly, the arguments already used, from the gradual increase of mankind, from

² Serm. iii.

the known plantations of most countries, from the recent invention of letters and arts, &c. do conclude as forcibly against the eternity of the world, as against infinite generations of human race. For if the present frame of the earth be supposed eternal; by the same notion they make mankind to have been coeternal with it. For otherwise this eternal earth, after she had been eternally barren and desolate, must at last have spontaneously produced mankind, without new cause from without, or any alteration in her own texture: which is so gross an absurdity, that even no Atheist hath yet affirmed it. So that it evidently follows, since mankind had a beginning, that the present form of the earth, and therefore the whole system of the world, had a beginning also.

Which being proved and established; we are now enabled to give answers to some bold queries and objections of Atheists; that since God is described as a being infinitely powerful and perfectly good; and that these attributes were essential to him from all eternity; why did he not by his power, for the more ample communication of his goodness, create the world from eternity, if he created it at all? or at least many millions of ages ago before this short span of duration of five or six thousand years? To the first we reply, that since we have discovered an internal and natural impossibility

sibility that a successive duration should be actually eternal; it is to us a flat contradiction, that the world should have been created from everlasting. And therefore it is no affront to the divine omnipotence, if by reason of the formal incapacity and repugnancy of the thing we conceive that the world could not possibly have been made from all eternity, even by God himself. Which gives an answer to the second question, Why created so lately? For, if it could not be created from eternity, there can no instant be assigned for its creation in time, though never so many myriads and millions of years since, but the same query may be put, Why but now, and Why so late? for even before that remoter period God was eternally existent, and might have made the world as many myriads of ages still backwards before that: and consequently this objection is absurd and unreasonable. For else, if it was good and allowable, it would eternally hinder God from exerting his creative power, because he could never make a world so early, at any given moment; but it may truly be said he could have created it sooner. Or if they think there may be a soonest instant of possible creation; yet, since all instants have an equal pre-tence to it in human apprehension, why may not this recent production of the world, according to sacred authority, be supposed to be
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that soonest ? At least it may make that claim to it that cannot be baffled by their arguments, which equally conclude against all claims, against any conceivable beginning of the world.

And so when they profanely ask, Why did not this supposed Deity, if he really made the heavens, make them boundless and immense, a fit and honourable mansion for an infinite and incomprehensible being ; or at least vastly more ample and magnificent than this narrow cottage of a world ? we may make them this answer : *First*, it seems impossible and a contradiction, that a created world should be infinite ; because it is the nature of quantity and motion, that they can never be actually and positively infinite : they have a power indeed and a capacity of being increased without end ; so as no quantity can be assigned so vast, but still a larger may be imagined ; no motion so swift or languid, but a greater velocity or slowness may still be conceived ; no positive duration of it so long, than which a longer may not be supposed ; but even that very power hinders them from being actually infinite. From whence, *secondly*, it follows, that though the world was a million of times more spacious and ample than even astronomy supposes it, or yet another million bigger than that, and so on in infinite progression ; yet still they might
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make the same exception world without end. For since God Almighty can do all that is possible, and quantity hath always a possibility of being enlarged more and more ; he could never create so ample a world, but still it would be true, that he could have made a bigger; the fecundity of his creative power never growing barren, nor ever to be exhausted. Now what may always be an exception against all possible worlds, can never be a just one against any whatsoever.

And when they scoffingly demand, Why would this imaginary Omnipotence make such mean pieces of workmanship ? What an indigent and impotent thing is his principal creature man ! Would not boundless beneficence have communicated his divine perfections in the most eminent degrees ? they may receive this reply ; that we are far from such arrogance, as to pretend to the highest dignity, and be the chief of the whole creation : we believe an invisible world, and a scale of spiritual beings all nobler than ourselves : nor yet are we so low and base as their atheism would depress us ; not walking statues of clay, not the sons of brute earth, whose final inheritance is death and corruption : we carry the image of God in us, a rational and immortal soul ; and, though we be now indigent and feeble, yet we aspire after eternal happiness, and

and firmly expect a great exaltation of all our natural powers. But whatsoever was or can be made, whether *angels or archangels, cherubims or seraphims*, whether *thrones or dominions, or principalities or powers*, all the glorious host of heaven, must needs be finite, and imperfect, and dependent creatures: and God out of the *exceeding greatness of his power* is still able, without end, to create higher classes of beings. For where can we put a stop to the efficacy of the Almighty? or what can we assign for the highest of all possible finite perfections? There can be no such thing as an *almost infinite*; there can be nothing next or second to an omnipotent God: * *Nec viget quicquam simile aut secundum*; as the heathen poet said excellently well of the supposed father of gods and men. The infinite distance between the Creator and the noblest of all creatures can never be measured nor exhausted by endless addition of finite degrees. So that no actual creature can ever be the most perfect of all possible creation. Which shews the folly of this query, that might always be demanded, let things be as they will; that would impiously and absurdly attempt to tie the arm of omnipotence from doing any thing at all, because it can never do its utmost.

* Horat. Car. i. 12.

II. I proceed now to the second proposition, that neither matter universally and abstractly considered, nor motion as its attribute and property, can have existed from all eternity. And to this I shall speak the more briefly; not only because it is an abstruse and metaphysical speculation, but because it is of far less moment and consequence than the rest: since without this we can evince the existence of God from the origin and frame of the universe. For if the present or a like system of the world cannot possibly have been eternal; ^b and if without God it could neither naturally nor fortuitously emerge out of a chaos; ^c we must necessarily have recourse to a Deity, as the contriver and maker of heaven and earth; whether we suppose he created them out of nothing, or had the materials ready eternally to his hand. But nevertheless, because we are verily persuaded of the truth of this article, we shall briefly assign some reasons of our belief in these following particulars.

First, *It is a thing possible, that matter may have been produced out of nothing.* It is urged as an universal maxim, that *nothing can proceed from nothing.* Now this we readily allow; and yet it will prove nothing against the possibility of creation. For, when they say, no-

^b By the first proposition.

^c By the third proposition.

thing

thing from nothing, they must so understand it, as excluding all causes, both material and efficient. In which sense it is most evidently and infallibly true; being equivalent to this proposition, that nothing can make itself; or, nothing cannot bring its no-self out of non-entity into something. Which only expresses thus much, that matter did not produce itself, or, that all substances did not emerge out of an universal nothing. Now, who ever talked at that rate? We do not say, the world was created from nothing and by nothing; we assert an eternal God to have been the efficient cause of it. So that a creation of the world out of nothing by something, and by that something that includes in its nature a necessary existence and perfection of power, is certainly no contradiction, nor opposes that common maxim. Whence it manifestly follows, that since God may do any thing that implies not a contradiction; if there be such an essence as God, he may have created matter out of nothing, that is, have given an existence to matter, which had no being before.

And, secondly, *It is very probable, that matter has been actually created out of nothing.*

^d In a former discourse we have proved sufficiently, that human souls are not mere mo-

^d Serm. ii.

dification of matter, but real and spiritual substances, that have as true an existence as our very bodies themselves. Now, no man, as I conceive, can seriously think that his own soul hath existed from all eternity. He cannot believe the stuff or materials of his soul to have been eternal, and the soul to have been made up of them at the time of his conception. For a human soul is no compound being; it is not made of particles, as our bodies are; but it is one simple homogeneous essence: neither can he think, that the personality of his soul, with its faculties inherent in it, has existed eternally; this is against common sense, and it needs no refutation. Nay, though a man could be so extravagant as to hold this assertion, that his soul, his personal self, has been from everlasting; yet even this in the issue would be destructive to atheism, since it supposes an eternal Being, endued with understanding and wisdom. We will take it then as a thing confessed, that the immaterial souls of men have been produced out of nothing. But if God hath actually created those intelligent substances that have such nobility and excellency of being above brute senseless matter; it is pervicaciousness to deny that he created matter also: unless they will say, necessary existence is included in the very essence and idea of matter.

But

But matter doth not include in its nature a necessity of existence. For human souls, as is proved before, have been actually created, and consequently have not necessary existence included in their essence. Now can any man believe, that his spiritual soul, that understands, and judges, and invents; endowed with those divine faculties of sense, memory, and reason; hath a dependent and precarious being created and preserved by another; while the particles of this dead ink and paper have been necessarily eternal and uncreated? It is against natural reason; and no one, while he contemplates an individual body, can discern that necessity of its existence. But men have been taught to believe, that extension or space, and body are both the selfsame thing. So that because they cannot imagine, how space can either begin or cease to exist; they presently conclude, that extended infinite matter must needs be eternal.

* But I shall fully prove hereafter, that body and space or distance are quite different things, and that a vacuity is interspersed among the particles of matter, and such a one as hath a vastly larger extension than all the matter of the universe. Which now being supposed, they ought to abstract their imagination from that false infinite extension, and conceive one

* Serm. vii.

particle of matter, surrounded on all sides with vacuity, and contiguous to no other body. And whereas formerly they fancied an immense boundless space, as an homogeneous one ; which great individual they believed might deserve the attribute of necessary existence : let them now please to imagine one solitary atom, that hath no dependence on the rest of the world ; and is no more sustained in being by other matter, than it could be created by it ; and then I would ask the question, whether this poor atom, sluggish and unactive as it is, doth involve necessity of existence, the first and highest of all perfections, in its particular nature and notion ? I dare presume for the negative in the judgments of all serious men. ^f And I observe the Epicureans take much pains to convince us, that in natural corruptions and dissolutions, atoms are not reduced to nothing ; which surely would be needless, if the very idea of atoms imported self-existence. And yet if one atom do not include so much in its notion and essence ; all atoms put together, that is, all the matter of the universe cannot include it. So that upon the whole matter, since creation is no contradiction ; since God hath certainly created nobler substances than matter ; and since matter is

^f Lucret. lib. i.

not necessarily eternal ; it is most reasonable to believe, that the eternal and self-existent God created the material world, and produced it out of nothing.

And then as to the last proposition, that motion as an attribute or property of matter cannot have been from eternity. That we may wave some metaphysical arguments, which demonstrate that local motion cannot be positively eternal ; we shall only observe in two words, that if matter be not essentially eternal, as we have shewed before ; much less can motion be, that is but the adjunct and accident of it. Nay, though we should concede an eternity to matter ; yet why must motion be coeval with it ? which is not only not inherent and essential to matter, but may be produced and destroyed at the pleasure of free agents ; both which are flatly repugnant to an eternal and necessary duration. I am aware how some have asserted, that the same quantity of motion is always kept up in the world ; which may seem to favour the opinion of its infinite duration : but that assertion doth solely depend upon an absolute *plenum* ; which being refuted in my next discourse, it will then appear how absurd and false that conceit is, about the same quantity of motion ; how easily disproved from that power in human souls to excite motion when they please,
and

and from the gradual increase of men and other animals, and many arguments besides. Therefore let this also be concluded, that motion has not been eternal in an infinite past duration: which was the last thing to be proved.

A CONFUTATION OF ATHEISM

FROM THE

ORIGIN AND FRAME OF THE WORLD.

PART II.

SERMON VII.

Preached November the 7th, 1692.

ACTS xiv. 15—17.

That ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, who made heaven and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein: who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways. Nevertheless, he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.

WHEN we first entered upon this topic, the demonstration of God's existence from the origin and frame of the world, we offered to prove four propositions.

I. That this present system of heaven and earth cannot possibly have subsisted from all eternity.

P

II. That

II. That matter considered generally, and abstractly from any particular form and concretion, cannot possibly have been eternal: or, if matter could be so; yet motion cannot have coexisted with it eternally, as an inherent property and essential attribute of matter. These two we have already established in the preceding discourse; we shall now shew, in the third place,

III. That, though we should allow the Atheists, that matter and motion may have been from everlasting; yet if (as they now suppose) there were once no sun, nor stars, nor earth, nor planets, but the particles that now constitute them were diffused in the mundane space in manner of a chaos without any concretion or coalition; those dispersed particles could never of themselves by any kind of natural motion, whether called fortuitous or mechanical, have convened into this present or any other like frame of heaven and earth.

1. And first, as to that ordinary cant of illiterate and puny Atheists, the *fortuitous or casual concurrence of atoms*, that compendious and easy dispatch of the most important and difficult affair, the formation of a world; (besides that in our next undertaking it will be refuted all along;) I shall now briefly dispatch it, ^a from

^a Sermon. v.

what

what hath been formerly said concerning the true notions of fortune and chance. Whereby it is evident, that in the atheistical hypothesis of the world's production, fortuitous and mechanical must be the selfsame thing. Because *fortune* is no real entity nor physical essence, but a mere relative signification, denoting only this ; that such a thing said to fall out by fortune was really effected by material and necessary causes ; but the person, with regard to whom it is called fortuitous, was ignorant of those causes or their tendencies, and did not design or foresee such an effect. This is the only allowable and genuine notion of the word fortune. But thus to affirm, that the world was made *fortuitously*, is as much as to say, that before the world was made, there was some intelligent agent or spectator, who designing to do something else, or expecting that something else would be done with the materials of the world, there were some occult and unknown motions and tendencies in matter, which mechanically formed the world beside his design or expectation. Now the Atheists, we may presume, will be loth to assert a fortuitous formation in this proper sense and meaning ; whereby they will make understanding to be older than heaven and earth. Or if they should so assert it ; yet, unless they will affirm that the intelligent agent did dis-

pose and direct the inanimate matter, (which is what we would bring them to,) they must still leave their atoms to their mechanical affections; not able to make one step toward the production of a world beyond the necessary laws of motion. It is plain then, that *fortune*, as to the matter before us, is but a synonymous word with nature and necessity. It remains that we examine the adequate meaning of ^b*chance*; which properly signifies, that all events called casual, among inanimate bodies, are mechanically and naturally produced according to the determinate figures, and textures, and motions of those bodies; with this negation only, that those inanimate bodies are not conscious of their own operations, nor contrive and cast about how to bring such events to pass. So that thus to say, that the world was made *casually* by the concurrence of atoms, is no more than to affirm, that the atoms composed the world mechanically and fatally; only they were not sensible of it, nor studied and considered about so noble an undertaking. For if atoms formed the world according to the essential properties of bulk, figure, and motion, they formed it *mechanically*; and if they formed it mechanically without perception and design, they formed

it *casually*. So that this negation of consciousness being all that the notion of chance can add to that of mechanism; we, that do not dispute this matter with the Atheists, nor believe that atoms ever acted by counsel and thought, may have leave to consider the several names of *fortune*, and *chance*, and *nature*, and *mechanism*, as one and the same hypothesis. Wherefore once for all to overthrow all possible explications which Atheists have or may assign for the formation of the world, we will undertake to evince this following proposition:

2. That the atoms or particles which now constitute heaven and earth, being once separate and diffused in the mundane space, like the supposed *chaos*, could never, *without a God, by their mechanical affections*, have convened into this present frame of things, or any other like it.

Which that we may perform with the greater clearness and conviction, it will be necessary, in a discourse about the formation of the world, to give you a brief account of some of the most principal and systematical *phænomena* that occur in the world now that it is formed.

(1.) The most considerable *phænomenon* belonging to terrestrial bodies is the general action of *gravitation*, whereby all known
P 3
bodies

bodies in the vicinity of the earth do tend and prefs towards its center; not only such as are sensibly and evidently heavy, but even those that are comparatively the lightest, and even in their proper place, and natural elements; (as they usually speak;) as air gravitates even in air, and water in water. This hath been demonstrated and experimentally proved beyond contradiction, by several ingenious persons of the present age, but by none so perspicuously, and copiously, and accurately, as by the ^chonourable Founder of this Lecture, in his incomparable Treatises of the Air and Hydrostatics.

(2.) Now this is the constant property of *gravitation*, that the weight of all bodies around the earth is ever proportional to the quantity of their matter: as for instance, a pound weight (examined hydrostatically) of all kinds of bodies, though of the most different forms and textures, doth always contain an equal quantity of solid mass or corporeal substance. This is the ancient doctrine of the ^dEpicurean physiology, then and since very probably indeed, but yet precariously asserted: but it is lately demonstrated and put beyond controversy by that very excellent and divine theorist ^eMr.

^c Mr. Boyle's Physicom. Exp. of Air. Hydrostat. Paradoxes.

^d Lucret. lib. i.

^e Newton. Philos. Natur. Princ. Math. lib. iii. prop. 6.

Isaac

Isaac Newton, to whose most admirable sagacity and industry we shall frequently be obliged in this and the following discourse.

I will not entertain this auditory with an account of the demonstration; but referring the curious to the book itself for full satisfaction, I shall now proceed and build upon it as a truth solidly established, *that all bodies weigh according to their matter*; provided only that the compared bodies be at equal distances from the center toward which they weigh. Because the further they are removed from the center, the lighter they are; decreasing gradually and uniformly in weight, in a duplicate proportion to the increase of the distance.

(3.) Now since gravity is found proportional to the quantity of matter, there is a manifest necessity of admitting a *vacuum*, another principal doctrine of the *atomical* philosophy. Because if there were every where an absolute plenitude and density without any empty pores and interstices between the particles of bodies, then all bodies of equal dimensions would contain an equal quantity of matter; and consequently, as we have shewed before, would be equally ponderous: so that gold, copper, stone, wood, &c. would have all the same specific weight; which experience assures us they have not: neither

would any of them descend in the air, as we all see they do ; because, if all space was full, even the air would be as dense and specifically as heavy as they. If it be said, that, though the difference of specific gravity may proceed from variety of texture, the lighter bodies being of a more loose and porous composition, and the heavier more dense and compact ; yet an ethereal subtile matter, which is in a perpetual motion, may penetrate and pervade the minutest and inmost cavities of the closest bodies, and adapting itself to the figure of every pore, may adequately fill them ; and so prevent all vacuity, without increasing the weight. To this we answer, that that subtile matter itself must be of the same substance and nature with all other matter, and therefore it also must weigh proportionally to its bulk ; and as much of it as at any time is comprehended within the pores of a particular body must gravitate jointly with that body ; so that if the presence of this ethereal matter made an absolute fulness, all bodies of equal dimensions would be equally heavy : which being refuted by experience, it necessarily follows, that there is a vacuity ; and that (notwithstanding some little objections full of cavil and sophistry) mere and simple extension or space hath a quite different nature and notion from real body and impenetrable substance.

(4.)

(4.) This therefore being established; in the next place, it is of great consequence to our present enquiry, if we can make a computation, how great is the whole sum of the void spaces in our system, and what proportion it bears to the corporeal substance. ^f By many and accurate trials it manifestly appears, that refined gold, the most ponderous of known bodies, (though even that must be allowed to be porous too, because it is dissoluble in mercury, and aqua regis, and other chymical liquors; and because it is naturally a thing impossible, that the figures and sizes of its constituent particles should be so justly adapted, as to touch one another in every point,) I say, gold is in specific weight to common water as 19 to 1; and water to common air as 850 to 1: so that gold is to air as 16150 to 1. Whence it clearly appears, seeing matter and gravity are always commensurate, that (though we should allow the texture of gold to be entirely close without any vacuity) the ordinary air in which we live and respire is of so thin a composition, that 16149 parts of its dimensions are mere emptiness and nothing; and the remaining one only material and real substance. But if gold itself be admitted, as it must be, for a porous concrete, the proportion of void to

^f Mr. Boyle of Air and Porosity of Bodies.

body in the texture of common air will be so much the greater. And thus it is in the lowest and densest region of the air near the surface of the earth, where the whole mass of air is in a state of violent compression, the inferior being pressed and constricted by the weight of all the incumbent. But, since the air is now certainly known to consist of ^s elastic or springy particles, that have a continual tendency and endeavour to expand and display themselves; and the dimensions, to which they expand themselves, to be reciprocally as the compression; it follows, that the higher you ascend in it, where it is less and less compressed by the superior air, the more and more it is rarefied. So that at the height of a few miles from the surface of the earth, it is computed to have some million parts of empty space in its texture for one of solid matter. And at the height of one terrestrial semi-diameter (not above four thousand miles) the ether is of that wonderful tenuity, ^h that, by an exact calculation, if a small sphere of common air of one inch diameter (already 16149 parts nothing) should be further expanded to the thinness of that ether, it would more than take up the vast orb of Saturn, which is many

^s Mr. Boyle, *ibid.*

^h Newton. *Philos. Nat. Principia Math.* p. 503.

million

million million times bigger than the whole globe of the earth. And yet, the higher you ascend above that region, the rarefaction still gradually increases without stop or limit: so that, in a word, the whole concave of the firmament, except the sun and planets and their atmospheres, may be considered as a mere void. Let us allow then, that all the matter of the system of our sun may be 50000 times as much as the whole mass of the earth; and we appeal to astronomy, if we are not liberal enough and even prodigal in this concession. And let us suppose further, that the whole globe of the earth is entirely solid and compact without any void interstices; notwithstanding what hath been shewed before, as to the texture of gold itself. Now, though we have made such ample allowances, we shall find, notwithstanding, that the void space of our system is immensely bigger than all its corporeal mass. For, to proceed upon our supposition, that all the matter within the firmament is 50000 times bigger than the solid globe of the earth; if we assume the diameter of the *orbis magnus* (wherein the earth moves about the sun) to be only 7000 times as big as the diameter of the earth, (though the latest and most accurate observations make it thrice 7000,) and the diameter of the firmament to be only 100000 times as long as the diameter of

of

of the *orbis magnus*, (though it cannot possibly be less than that, but may be vastly and unspeakably bigger,) we must pronounce, after such large concessions on that side, and such great abatements on ours, that the sum of empty spaces within the concave of the firmament is 6860 million million million times bigger than all the matter contained in it.

Now from hence we are enabled to form a right conception and imagination of the supposed *chaos*, and then we may proceed to determine the controversy with more certainty and satisfaction, whether a world like the present could possibly without a divine influence be formed in it, or no?

1. And first, because every fixed star is supposed by astronomers to be of the same nature with our sun; and each may very possibly have planets about them, though by reason of their vast distance they be invisible to us; we will assume this reasonable supposition, that the same proportion of void space to matter, which is found in our sun's region within the sphere of the fixed stars, may competently well hold in the whole mundane space. I am aware, that in this computation we must not assign the whole capacity of that sphere for the region of our sun; but allow half of its diameter for the *radii* of the several regions of the next fixed stars: so that diminishing our former

mer number, as this last consideration requires, we may safely affirm from certain and demonstrated principles, that the empty space of our solar region (comprehending half of the diameter of the firmament) is 8575 hundred thousand million million times more ample than all the corporeal substance in it. And we may fairly suppose, that the same proportion may hold through the whole extent of the universe.

2. And secondly, as to the state or condition of matter before the world was a making, which is compendiously expressed by the word *chaos*; they must either suppose, that the matter of our solar system was *evenly* or *well-nigh evenly* diffused through the region of the sun, which would represent a particular chaos: or that all matter universally was so spread through the whole mundane space, which would truly exhibit a general chaos; no part of the universe being rarer or denser than another. And this is agreeable to the ancient description of chaos, that *the heavens and earth had μίαν ἰδέαν, μίαν μορφήν, one form, one texture and constitution*; which could not be, unless all the mundane matter were *uniformly* and *evenly* diffused. It is indifferent to our

ⁱ Diod. Sicul. lib. i. Κατὰ τὴν ἐξ ἀρχῆς τῶν ὅλων σύστασιν μίαν ἔχον ἰδέαν οὐρανόν τε καὶ γῆν, μεμυγμένης αὐτῶν τῆς φύσεως. Apoll. Rhodius, lib. i. Ἦενδιν δ' ὡς γαῖα καὶ οὐρανὸς ἡδὲ θάλασσα, Τὸ πρὶν ἐπ' ἀλλήλοισι μὴ συναρηρότα μορφῇ.

dispute,

dispute, whether they suppose it to have continued a long time or very little in the state of diffusion. For, if there were but one single moment in all past eternity, when matter was so diffused, we shall plainly and fully prove, that it could never have convened afterwards into the present frame and order of things.

3. It is evident from what we have newly proved, that in the supposition of such a chaos or such an even diffusion either of the whole mundane matter, or that of our system, (for it matters not which they assume,) every single particle would have a sphere of void space around it 8575 hundred thousand million million times bigger than the dimensions of that particle. Nay, further, though the proportion already appear so immense; yet every single particle would really be surrounded with a void sphere eight times as capacious as that newly mentioned; its diameter being compounded of the diameter of the proper sphere, and the semi-diameters of the contiguous spheres of the neighbouring particles. From whence it appears, that every particle (supposing them globular or not very oblong) would be above nine million times their own length from any other particle. And moreover, in the whole surface of this void sphere there can only twelve particles be *evenly* placed, as the hypothesis requires; that is,
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at equal distances from the central one and from each other : so that if the matter of our system or of the universe was equally dispersed, like the supposed chaos, the result and issue would be, not only that every atom would be many million times its own length distant from any other ; but, if any one should be moved mechanically (without direction or attraction) to the limit of that distance, it is above a hundred million millions odds to an unit, that it would not strike upon any other atom, but glide through an empty interval without any contact.

4. It is true, that while I calculate these measures, I suppose all the particles of matter to be at absolute rest among themselves, and situated in an exact and mathematical evenness ; neither of which is likely to be allowed by our adversaries, who not admitting the former, but asserting the eternity of motion, will consequently deny the latter also : because, in the very moment that motion is admitted in the chaos, such an exact evenness cannot possibly be preserved. But this I do, not to draw any argument against them from the universal rest or accurately equal diffusion of matter ; but only that I may better demonstrate the great rarity and tenuity of their imaginary chaos, and reduce it to computation : which computation will hold with exactness enough, though

though we allow the particles of the chaos to be variously moved, and to differ something in size, and figure, and situation. For if some particles should approach nearer each other than in the former proportion; with respect to some other particles they would be as much remoter. So that, notwithstanding a small diversity of their positions and distances, the whole aggregate of matter, as long as it retained the name and nature of chaos; would retain well-nigh an uniform tenuity of texture, and may be considered as an homogeneous fluid: as several portions of the same sort of water are reckoned to be of the same specific gravity; though it be naturally impossible that every particle and pore of it, considered geometrically, should have equal sizes and dimensions.

We have now represented the true scheme and condition of the chaos; how all the particles would be disunited; and what vast intervals of empty space would lie between each. To form a system therefore, it is necessary that these squandered atoms should convene and unite into great and compact masses, like the bodies of the earth and planets. Without such a coalition the diffused chaos must have continued and reigned to all eternity. But how could particles so widely dispersed combine

bine into, that closeness of texture? Our adversaries can have only these two ways of accounting for it.

First, By the common motion of matter, proceeding from external impulse and conflict, (without attraction,) by which every body moves uniformly in a direct line, according to the determination of the impelling force. For, they may say, the atoms of the chaos being variously moved, according to this catholic law, must needs knock and interfere; by which means some that have convenient figures for mutual coherence might chance to stick together, and others might join to those, and so by degrees such huge masses might be formed, as afterwards became suns and planets: or there might arise some vertiginous motion or whirlpools in the matter of the chaos, whereby the atoms might be thrust and crowded to the middle of those whirlpools, and there constipate one another into great solid globes, such as now appear in the world.

Or, *secondly*, by mutual gravitation or attraction. For they may assert, that matter hath inherently and essentially such an internal energy, whereby it incessantly tends to unite itself to all other matter; so that several particles, placed in a void space, at any distance whatsoever, would without any external impulse spontaneously convene and unite together. And thus
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the atoms of the chaos, though never so widely diffused, might by this innate property of attraction soon assemble themselves into great spherical masses, and constitute systems like the present heaven and earth.

This is all that can be proposed by Atheists, as an efficient cause of the world. For as to the Epicurean theory, of atoms descending down an infinite space by an inherent principle of gravitation, which tends not toward other matter, but toward a *vacuum* or nothing; and verging from the perpendicular, ** no body knows why, nor when, nor where*; it is such miserable absurd stuff, so repugnant to itself, and so contrary to the known phenomena of nature, though it contented supine unthinking Atheists for a thousand years together, that we will not now honour it with a special refutation. But what it hath common with the other explications, we will fully confute together with them in these three propositions.

(1.) That by common motion (without attraction) the diffused particles of the chaos could never make the world; could never convene into such great compact masses, as the planets now are; nor either acquire or continue such motions as the planets now have.

* Lucret. Nec regione loci certa, nec tempore certo.

(2.) That such a mutual gravitation or spontaneous attraction can neither be inherent and essential to matter ; nor ever supervene to it, unless impressed and infused into it by a divine power.

(3.) That though we should allow such attraction to be natural and essential to all matter ; yet the atoms of a chaos could never so convene by it, as to form the present system : or, if they could form it, it could neither acquire such motions, nor continue permanent in this state without the power and providence of a divine being.

(1.) And first, that by common motion the matter of chaos could never convene into such masses as the planets now are. Any man, that considers the spacious void intervals of the chaos, how immense they are in proportion to the bulk of the atoms, will hardly induce himself to believe, that particles so widely diffused could ever throng and crowd one another into a close and compact texture. He will rather conclude, that those few that should happen to clash, might rebound after the collision ; or, if they cohered, yet by the next conflict with other atoms might be separated again ; and so on in an eternal vicissitude of fast and loose, without ever consociating into the huge condense bodies of planets ; some of whose particles upon this supposition

must have travelled many millions of leagues through the gloomy regions of chaos, to place themselves where they now are. But then how rarely would there be any clashing at all; how very rarely in comparison to the number of atoms! The whole multitude of them, generally speaking, might freely move and rove for ever with very little occurring or interfering. Let us conceive two of the nearest particles according to our former calculation; or rather let us try the same proportions in another example, that will come easier to the imagination. Let us suppose two ships, fitted with durable timber and rigging, but without pilot or mariners, to be placed in the vast Atlantic or the Pacific Ocean, as far asunder as may be; how many thousand years might expire, before those solitary vessels should happen to strike one against the other! But let us imagine the space yet more ample, even the whole face of the earth to be covered with sea, and the two ships to be placed in the opposite poles; might not they now move long enough without any danger of clashing? And yet I find, that the two nearest atoms in our evenly diffused chaos have ten thousand times less proportion to the two void circular planes around them, than our two ships would have to the whole surface of the deluge. Let us assume then another deluge ten thousand times larger than Noah's;

Noah's ; is it not now utterly incredible, that our two vessels, placed there antipodes to each other, should ever happen to concur? And yet let me add; that the ships would move in one and the same surface ; and consequently must needs encounter, when they either advance towards one another in direct lines, or meet in the intersection of cross ones ; but the atoms may not only fly side-ways, but over likewise and under each other : which makes it many million times more improbable that they should interfere than the ships, even in the last and unlikeliest instance. But they may say, though the odds indeed be unspeakable that the atoms do not convene in any set number of trials, yet in an infinite succession of them may not such a combination possibly happen? But let them consider, ^b that the improbability of casual hits is never diminished by repetition of trials ; they are as unlikely to fall out at the thousandth as at the first. So that in a matter of mere chance, when there is so many millions odds against any assignable experiment, it is in vain to expect it should ever succeed, even in endless duration.

But though we should concede it to be simply possible, that the matter of chaos might convene into great masses, like planets ; yet

^b Serm. v.

it is absolutely impossible that those masses should acquire such revolutions about the sun. Let us suppose any one of those masses to be the present earth. Now the annual revolution of the earth must proceed (in this hypothesis) *either* from the sum and result of the several motions of all the particles that formed the earth, *or* from a new impulse from some external matter, after it was formed. The *former* is apparently absurd, because the particles that formed the round earth must needs convene from all points and quarters towards the middle, and would generally tend toward its centre; which would make the whole compound to rest in a poise: or at least that overplus of motion, which the particles of one hemisphere could have above the other, would be very small and inconsiderable; too feeble and languid to propel so vast and ponderous a body with that prodigious velocity. And *secondly*, it is impossible that any external matter should impel that compound mass, after it was formed. It is manifest, that nothing else could impel it, unless the ethereal matter be supposed to be carried about the sun like a *vortex* or whirlpool, as a vehicle to convey it and the rest of the planets. But this is refuted from what we have shewn above, that those spaces of the ether may be reckoned a mere void, the whole quantity of their matter scarce amounting to the

the weight of a grain. It is refuted also from matter of fact in the motion of comets; which, as often as they are visible to us, are in the region of our planets, and there are observed to move, some in quite contrary courses to theirs, and some, in cross and oblique ones, in planes inclined to the plane of the ecliptic in all kinds of angles: which firmly evinces, that the regions of the ether are empty and free, and neither assist nor resist the revolutions of planets. But moreover there could not possibly arise in the chaos any *vortices* or whirlpools at all; either to form the globes of the planets, or to revolve them when formed. It is acknowledged by all, that inanimate unactive matter moves always in a straight line, nor ever reflects in an angle, nor bends in a circle, (which is a continual reflection,) unless *either* by some external impulse that may divert it from the direct motion, *or* by an intrinsic principle of gravity or attraction that may make it describe a curve line about the attracting body. But this latter cause is not now supposed; and the former could never beget whirlpools in a chaos of so great a laxity and thinness. For it is matter of certain experience, and universally allowed, that all bodies moved circularly have a perpetual endeavour

^c Newton, *ibidem*, p. 408.

to recede from the centre, and every moment would fly out in right lines, if they were not violently restrained and kept in by contiguous matter. But there is no such restraint in the supposed chaos, no want of empty room there; no possibility of effecting one single revolution in way of a *vortex*, which necessarily requires (if attraction be not supposed) either an absolute fulness of matter, or a pretty close con-
stipation and mutual contact of its particles.

And for the same reason it is evident, that the planets could not continue their revolutions about the sun, though they could possibly acquire them. For, to drive and carry the planets in such orbs as they now describe, that ethereal matter must be compact and dense, as dense as the very planets themselves; otherwise they would certainly fly out in spiral lines to the very circumference of the *vortex*. But we have often inculcated, that the wide tracts of the ether may be reputed as a mere extended void. So that there is nothing (in this hypothesis) that can retain and bind the planets in their orbs for one single moment; but they would immediately desert them and the neighbourhood of the sun, and vanish away in tangents to their several circles into the abyss of mundane space.

(2.) Secondly, We affirm, that mutual gravitation, or spontaneous attraction, cannot possibly

sibly be innate and essential to matter. By attraction we do not here understand what is properly, though vulgarly, called so in the operations of drawing, sucking, pumping, &c. which is really pulsion and trusion; and belongs to that common motion, which we have already shewn to be insufficient for the formation of a world. But we now mean (as we have explained it before) such a power and quality, whereby all parcels of matter would mutually attract or mutually tend and press to all others; so that, for instance, two distant atoms *in vacuo* would spontaneously convene together without the impulse of external bodies.

Now, *first*, we say, if our Atheists suppose this power to be inherent and essential to matter, they overthrow their own hypothesis; there could never be a chaos at all upon these terms; but the present form of our system must have continued from all eternity, against their own supposition, and what we have proved in our last. ^d For, if they affirm that there might be a chaos notwithstanding innate gravity, then let them assign any period though never so remote, when the diffused matter might convene. They must confess, that before that assigned period matter had existed

^d Vide Serm. vi. and Serm. viii.

eternally,

eternally, inseparably endued with this principle of attraction; and yet had never attracted nor convened before, in that infinite duration: which is so monstrous an absurdity, as even they will blush to be charged with. But some perhaps may imagine, that a former system might be dissolved and reduced to a chaos, from which the present system might have its original; as that former had from another, and so on; new systems having grown out of old ones in infinite vicissitudes from all past eternity. But we say, that in the supposition of innate gravity no system at all could be dissolved: for how is it possible, that the matter of solid masses like earth, and planets, and stars, should fly up from their centres against its inherent principle of mutual attraction, and diffuse itself in a chaos? This is absurd than the other: that only supposed innate gravity not to be exerted; this makes it to be defeated, and to act contrary to its own nature. So that upon all accounts this essential power of gravitation or attraction is irreconcilable with the Atheist's own doctrine of a chaos.

And, *secondly*, it is repugnant to common sense and reason. It is utterly inconceivable, that inanimate brute matter, without the mediation of some immaterial being, should operate upon and affect other matter without mutual

tual contact ; that distant bodies should act upon each other through a *vacuum*, without the intervention of something else, by and through which the action may be conveyed from one to the other. We will not obscure and perplex with multitude of words what is so clear and evident by its own light, and must needs be allowed by all that have competent use of thinking, and are initiated into, I do not say the mysteries, but the plainest principles of philosophy. Now mutual gravitation or attraction, in our present acception of the words, is the same thing with this ; it is an operation, or virtue, or influence of distant bodies upon each other through an empty interval, without any *effluvia*, or exhalations, or other corporeal medium to convey and transmit it. This power therefore cannot be innate and essential to matter. And, if it be not essential, it is consequently most manifest, since it doth not depend upon motion or rest, or figure or position of parts, which are all the ways that matter can diversify itself, that it could never supervene to it, unless impressed and infused into it by an immaterial and divine power.

We have proved, that a power of mutual gravitation, without contact or impulse, can in nowise be attributed to mere matter ; or, if it could, we shall presently shew, that it would
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be wholly unable to form the world out of a *chaos*. What then if it be made appear, that there is really such a power of gravity, which cannot be ascribed to mere matter, perpetually acting in the constitution of the present system? This would be a new and invincible argument for the being of God; being a direct and positive proof, that an immaterial living mind doth inform and actuate the dead matter, and support the frame of the world. I will lay before you some certain *phenomena* of nature, and leave it to your consideration from what principle they can proceed. It is demonstrated, that the sun, moon, and all the planets do reciprocally gravitate one toward another: that the gravitating power of each of them is exactly proportional to their matter, and arises from the several gravitations or attractions of all the individual particles that compose the whole mass: that all matter near the surface of the earth (and so in all the planets) doth not only gravitate downwards, but upwards also, and sideways, and toward all imaginable points; though the tendency downward be predominant and alone discernible, because of the greatness and nearness of the attracting body, the earth: that every particle of the whole system doth attract and is attracted by all the rest, all operating upon all: that this *universal attraction or gravitation* is an incessant,

cessant, regular, and uniform action by certain and established laws according to quantity of matter and longitude of distance: that it cannot be destroyed, nor impaired, nor augmented by any thing, neither by motion or rest, nor situation nor posture, nor alteration of form, nor diversity of medium: that it is not a magnetical power, nor the effect of a vortical motion; those common attempts towards the explication of gravity: these things, I say, are fully demonstrated as matters of fact, by that very ingenious author, whom we cited before. Now how is it possible that these things should be effected by any material and mechanical agent? We have evinced, that mere matter cannot operate upon matter without mutual contact. It remains then, that these phenomena are produced *either* by the intervention of air or ether or other such medium, that communicates the impulse from one body to another; or by effluvia and spirits, that are emitted from the one, and pervene to the other. We can conceive no other way of performing them mechanically. But what impulse or agitation can be propagated through the ether, from one particle entombed and wedged in the very centre of the earth, to another in the centre of Saturn? Yet even those two particles do reci-

* Newton. *Philosoph. Natural. Princip. Math.* lib. iii.

procally affect each other with the same force and vigour, as they would do at the same distance in any other situation imaginable. And because the impulse from this particle is not directed to that only, but to all the rest in the universe; to all quarters and regions, at once invariably and incessantly: to do this mechanically, the same physical point of matter must move all manner of ways equally and constantly in the same instant and moment; which is flatly impossible. But, if this particle cannot propagate such motion, much less can it send out effluvia to all points without intermission or variation; such multitudes of effluvia as to lay hold on every atom in the universe without missing of one. Nay, every single particle of the very effluvia (since they also attract and gravitate) must in this supposition emit other secondary effluvia all the world over; and those others still emit more, and so *in infinitum*. Now, if these things be repugnant to human reason, we have great reason to affirm, that universal gravitation, a thing certainly existent in nature, is above all mechanism and material causes, and proceeds from a higher principle, a divine energy and impression.

(3.) Thirdly, we affirm, that, though we should allow that reciprocal attraction is essential to matter, yet the atoms of a chaos could never so convene by it, as to form the present system;

system ; or, if they could form it, yet it could neither acquire these revolutions, nor subsist in the present condition, without the conservation and providence of a divine Being.

1. For first, if the matter of the universe, and consequently the space through which it is diffused, be supposed to be *finite*, (and I think it might be demonstrated to be so, but that we have already exceeded the just measures of a sermon,) then, since every single particle hath an innate gravitation toward all others, proportionated by matter and distance ; it evidently appears, that the outward atoms of the chaos would necessarily tend inwards, and descend from all quarters toward the middle of the whole space: for, in respect to every atom, there would lie through the middle the greatest quantity of matter and the most vigorous attraction ; and those atoms would there form and constitute one huge spherical mass, which would be the only body in the universe. It is plain therefore, that upon this supposition the matter of the chaos could never compose such divided and different masses, as the stars and planets of the present world.

But, allowing our adversaries that the planets might be composed ; yet however they could not possibly acquire such revolutions in circular Orbs ; or (which is all one to our present purpose) in ellipses very little eccentric:
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For let them assign any place where the planets were formed. Was it nearer to the sun than the present distances are? But that is notoriously absurd; for then they must have ascended from the place of their formation, against the essential property of mutual attraction. Or, were each formed in the same orbs in which they now move? But then they must have moved from the point of rest, in an horizontal line, without any inclination or descent. Now there is no natural cause, neither innate gravity nor impulse of external matter, that could beget such a motion: for gravity alone must have carried them downwards to the vicinity of the sun. And, that the ambient ether is too liquid and empty to impel them horizontally with that prodigious celerity, we have sufficiently proved before. Or, were they made in some higher regions of the heavens, and from thence descended by their essential gravity, till they all arrived at their respective orbs; each with its present degree of velocity, acquired by the fall? But then why did they not continue their descent till they were contiguous to the sun, whither both mutual attraction and impetus carried them? What natural agent could turn them aside; could impel them so strongly with a transverse side-blow against that tremendous weight and rapidity, when whole planets were a falling? But if we should

should suppose, that by some cross attraction or other they might acquire an obliquity of descent, so as to miss the body of the sun, and to fall on one side of it? Then indeed the force of their fall would carry them quite beyond it; and so they might fetch a compass about it, and then return and ascend by the same steps and degrees of motion and velocity with which they descended before. Such an eccentric motion as this, much after the manner that comets revolve about the sun, they might possibly acquire by their innate principle of gravity; but circular revolutions, in concentric orbs about the sun or other central body, could in nowise be attained without the power of the divine arm. For the case of the planetary motion is this. Let us conceive all the planets to be formed or constituted with their centres in their several orbs; and at once to be impressed on them this gravitating energy toward all other matter, and a transverse impulse of a just quantity in each, projecting them directly in tangents to those orbs. The compound motion, which arises from this gravitation and projection together, describes the present revolutions of the primary planets about the sun, and of the secondary about those; the gravity prohibiting, that they cannot recede from the centres of their motions; and the transverse impulse withholding, that they

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they cannot approach to them. Now although gravity could be innate, (which we have proved that it cannot be,) yet certainly this projected, this transverse and violent motion can only be ascribed to the right hand of the *most high God, creator of heaven and earth,*

But, finally, if we should grant them, that these circular revolutions could be naturally attained; or, if they will, that this very individual world in its present posture and motion was actually formed out of chaos by mechanical causes; yet it requires a divine power and providence to have preserved it so long in the present state and condition. For what are the causes that preserve the system of our sun and his planets, so that the planets continue to move in the same orbs, neither receding from the sun, nor approaching nearer to him? We have shewn, that a transverse impulse, impressed upon the planets, retains them in their several orbs, that they are not drawn down toward the sun. And again, their gravitating powers so incline them towards the sun, that they are not carried upwards beyond their due distance from him. These two great agents, a transverse impulse, and gravity, are the secondary causes, under God, that maintain the system of sun and planets. Gravity we understand to be a constant energy or faculty, perpetually acting by certain measures and naturally

rally inviolable laws : we say, a *faculty* and power ; for we cannot conceive that the *act* of gravitation of this present moment can propagate itself, or produce that of the next. But the transverse impulse we conceive to have been one single act. For, by reason of the inactivity of matter, and its inability to change its present state either of moving or resting, that transverse motion would from one single impulse continue for ever equal and uniform, unless changed by the resistance of recurring bodies, or by a gravitating power. So that the planets, since they move horizontally (whereby gravity doth not alter their swiftness) and through the liquid and unresisting spaces of the heavens, (where either no bodies at all or inconsiderable ones do occur,) may preserve the same velocity which the first impulse impressed upon them, not only for five or six thousand years, but many millions of millions. It appears then, that if there was but one vast sun in the universe, and all the rest were planets revolving around him in concentric orbs at convenient distances, such a system as that would very long endure, could it but naturally have a principle of mutual attraction, and be once actually put into circular motions. But the frame of the present world hath a quite different structure : here is an innumerable multitude of fixed stars or suns ; all which

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being

being made up of the same common matter, must be supposed to be equally endued with a power of gravitation. For, if all have not such a power, what is it that could make that difference between bodies of the same sort? Nothing surely but a Deity could have so arbitrarily endued our sun and planets with a power of gravity not essential to matter; while all the fixed stars, that are so many suns, have nothing of that power. If the fixed stars then are supposed to have no power of gravitation, it is a plain proof of a divine Being. And it is as plain a proof of a divine Being, if they have the power of gravitation. For since they are neither revolved about a common centre, nor have any transverse impulse, what is there else to restrain them from approaching toward each other, as their gravitating power incites them? What natural cause can overcome nature itself? What is it that holds and keeps them in fixed stations and intervals against an incessant and inherent tendency to desert them? Nothing could hinder but that the outward stars, with their systems of planets, must necessarily have descended toward the middlemost system of the universe, whither all would be the most strongly attracted from all parts of a finite space. It is evident therefore, that the present frame of sun and fixed stars could not possibly subsist without the providence of that almighty

mighty Deity, ^f *who spake the word and they were made; who commanded and they were created; who hath made them fast for ever and ever, and hath given them a law, which shall not be broken.*

2. And, secondly, in the supposition of an *infinite* chaos, it is hard indeed to determine what would follow in this imaginary case from an innate principle of gravity. But, to hasten to a conclusion, we will grant for the present, that the diffused matter might convene into an infinite number of great masses at great distances from one another, like the stars and planets of this visible part of the world. But then it is impossible, that the planets should naturally attain these circular revolutions, either by principle of gravitation, or by impulse of ambient bodies. It is plain, here is no difference as to this; whether the world be infinite, or finite: so that the same arguments, that we have used before, may be equally urged in this supposition. And though we should concede, that these revolutions might be acquired, and that all were settled and constituted in the present state and posture of things; yet, we say, the continuance of this frame and order, for so long a duration as the known ages of the world, must necessarily infer the existence of God. For, though the universe was infinite,

^f Psal. cxlviii.

the now fixed stars could not be fixed, but would naturally convene together, and confound system with system ; because, all mutually attracting, every one would move whither it was most powerfully drawn. This, they may say, is indubitable in the case of a finite world, where some systems must needs be outmost, and therefore be drawn toward the middle : but, when infinite systems succeed one another through an infinite space, and none is either inward or outward ; may not all the systems be situated in an accurate poise ; and, because equally attracted on all sides, remain fixed and unmoved ? But to this we reply ; that unless the very mathematical centre of gravity of every system be placed and fixed in the very mathematical centre of the attractive power of all the rest, they cannot be evenly attracted on all sides, but must preponderate some way or other. Now he, that considers what a mathematical centre is, and that quantity is infinitely divisible, will never be persuaded that such an universal equilibrium, arising from the coincidence of infinite centres, can naturally be acquired or maintained. If they say, that, upon the supposition of infinite matter, every system would be infinitely, and therefore equally attracted on all sides ; and consequently would rest in an exact equilibrium, be the centre of its gravity in what position

position forever : this will overthrow their very hypothesis. For at this rate in an *infinite chaos* nothing at all could be formed ; no particles could convene by mutual attraction ; because every one there must have infinite matter around it, and therefore must rest for ever, being evenly balanced between infinite attractions. Even the planets upon this principle must gravitate no more toward the sun, than any other way ; so that they would not revolve in curve lines, but fly away in direct tangents, till they struck against other planets or stars in some remote regions of the infinite space. An equal attraction on all sides of all matter is just equal to no attraction at all : and, by this means, all the motion in the universe must proceed from external impulse alone ; which we have proved before to be an incompetent cause for the formation of a world.

And now, O thou almighty and eternal Creator, *“ having considered the heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained, with all the company of heaven we laud and magnify thy glorious name ; evermore praising thee and saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts, heaven and earth are full of thy glory. Glory be to thee, O Lord most high.*

■ Psal. viii.

A CONFUTATION OF ATHEISM

FROM THE

ORIGIN AND FRAME OF THE WORLD.

PART III.

SERMON VIII.

Preached December the 5th, 1692.

ACTS xiv. 15—17.

That ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, who made heaven and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein: who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways. Nevertheless, he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.

HAVING abundantly proved in our last exercise, that the frame of the present world could neither be made nor preserved without the power of God, we shall now consider the structure and motions of our own system, if any characters of divine wisdom and goodness may be discoverable by us. And even at the first

first and general view it very evidently appears to us (which is our fourth and last Proposition) that the order and beauty of the systematical parts of the world, the discernible ends and final causes of them, the τὸ βελτίον or me-
liority above what was necessary to be, do evince by a reflex argument, that it could not be produced by mechanism or chance, but by an intelligent and benign agent, *that by his excellent wisdom made the heavens.*

But, before we engage in this disquisition, we must offer one necessary caution ; that we need not nor do not confine and determine the purposes of God in creating all mundane bodies, merely to human ends and uses. Not that we believe it laborious and painful to Omnipotence to create a world out of nothing ; or more laborious to create a great world, than a small one : so as we might think it disagreeable to the majesty and tranquillity of the divine nature to take so much pains for our sakes. Nor do we count it any absurdity, that such a vast and immense universe should be made for the sole use of such mean and unworthy creatures as the children of men. For, if we consider the dignity of an intelligent being, and put that in the scales against brute inanimate matter, we may affirm, without overvaluing human nature, that the soul of one virtuous and religious man is of
greater

greater worth and excellency than the sun and his planets, and all the stars in the world. If therefore it could appear, that all the mundane bodies are some way conducive to the service of man ; if all were as beneficial to us, as the polar stars were formerly for navigation ; as the moon is for the flowing and ebbing of tides, by which an inestimable advantage accrues to the world ; for her officious courtesy in long winter nights, especially to the more northern nations, who, in a continual night it may be of a whole month, are so pretty well accommodated by the light of the moon reflected from frozen snow, that they do not much envy their antipodes a month's presence of the sun : if all the heavenly bodies were thus serviceable to us, we should not be backward to assign their usefulness to mankind, as the sole end of their creation. But we dare not undertake to shew, what advantage is brought to us by those innumerable stars in the galaxy and other parts of the firmament, not discernible by naked eyes, and yet each many thousand times bigger than the whole body of the earth. If you say they beget in us a great idea and veneration of the mighty author and governor of such stupendous bodies, and excite and elevate our minds to his adoration and praise ; you say very truly and well.

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But would it not raise in us a higher apprehension of the infinite majesty and boundless beneficence of God, to suppose that those remote and vast bodies were formed, not merely upon our account, to be peeped at through an optic glass, but for different ends and nobler purposes? And yet who will deny, but that there are great multitudes of lucid stars even beyond the reach of the best telescopes; and that every visible star may have opaque planets revolve about them, which we cannot discover? Now, if they were not created for our sakes, it is certain and evident, that they were not made for their own. For matter hath no life nor perception, is not conscious of its own existence, nor capable of happiness, nor gives the sacrifice of praise and worship to the author of its being. It remains therefore, that all bodies were formed for the sake of intelligent minds: and as the earth was principally designed for the being and service and contemplation of men, why may not all other planets be created for the like uses, each for their own inhabitants which have life and understanding? If any man will indulge himself in this speculation, he need not quarrel with revealed religion upon such an account. The holy Scriptures do not forbid him to suppose as great a multitude of systems, and as much inhabited, as he pleases. It is true, there

there is no mention in Moses's narrative of the creation, of any people in other planets: but it plainly appears, that the sacred historian doth only treat of the origins of terrestrial animals: he hath given us no account of God's creating the angels; and yet the same author, in the ensuing parts of the Pentateuch, makes not unfrequent mention of the *angels of God*. Neither need we be solicitous about the condition of those planetary people, nor raise frivolous disputes, how far they may participate in the miseries of Adam's fall, or in the benefits of Christ's incarnation. As if, because they are supposed to be *rational*, they must needs be concluded to be *men*? For what is man? not a *reasonable animal* merely, for that is not an adequate and distinguishing definition; but a rational mind of such particular faculties, united to an organical body of such a certain structure and form, in such peculiar laws of connection between the operations and affections of the mind and the motions of the body. Now, God Almighty, by the inexhausted fecundity of his creative power, may have made innumerable orders and classes of rational minds; some in their natural perfections higher than human souls, others inferior. But a mind of superior or meaner capacities than human would constitute

tute a different species, though united to a human body in the same laws of connection ; and a mind of human capacities would make another species, if united to a different body in different laws of connection. For this sympathetic union of a rational soul with matter, so as to produce a vital communication between them, is an arbitrary institution of the divine wisdom : there is no reason nor foundation in the separate natures of either substance, why any motion in the body should produce any sensation at all in the soul ; or why this motion should produce that particular sensation, rather than any other. God therefore may have joined immaterial souls, even of the same class and capacities in their separate state, to other kind of bodies, and in other laws of union ; and from those different laws of union there will arise quite different affections, and natures, and species of the compound beings. So that we ought not upon any account to conclude, that if there be rational inhabitants in the Moon, or Mars, or any unknown planets of other systems, they must therefore have human nature, or be involved in the circumstances of our world. And thus much was necessary to be here inculcated, (which will obviate and preclude the most considerable objections of our adversaries,)

verfaries,) that we do not determine the final caufes and ufefulness of the fyftematical parts of the world, merely as they have refpect to the exigencies or conveniencies of human life.

Let us now turn our thoughts and imaginations to the frame of our fyftem, if there we may trace any vifible footfteps of divine wifdom and beneficence. But we are all liable to many mistakes by the prejudices of childhood and youth, which few of us ever correct by a fcrutiny in our riper years, and a contemplation of the *phaenomena* of nature in their caufes and beginnings. What we have always feen to be done in one conftant and uniform manner, we are apt to imagine there was but that one way of doing it, and it could not be otherwife. This is a great error and impediment in a difquifition of this nature; to remedy which, we ought to confider every thing as not yet in being, and then diligently examine if it muft needs have been at all, or what other ways it might have been as poffibly as the prefent; and if we find a greater good and utility in the prefent conftitution, than would have accrued either from the total privation of it, or from other frames and ftructures that might as poffibly have been as it; we may then reasonably conclude, that the prefent conftitution proceeded, neither
from

from the necessity of material causes, nor the blind shuffles of an imaginary chance, but from an intelligent and good Being, that formed it that particular way out of choice and design. And especially, if this usefulness be conspicuous not in one or a few instances only, but in a long train and series of things, this will give us a firm and infallible assurance, that we have not passed a wrong judgment.

I. Let us proceed therefore by this excellent rule in the contemplation of our system: It is evident that all the planets receive heat and light from the body of the sun. Our own earth in particular would be barren and desolate, a dead dark lump of clay, without the benign influence of the solar rays ; which, without question, is true of all the other planets. It is good therefore, that there should be a sun, to warm and cherish the seeds of plants, and excite them to vegetation ; to impart an uninterrupted light to all parts of this system for the subsistence of animals. But how came the sun to be luminous ? not from the necessity of natural causes, or the constitution of the heavens. All the planets might have moved about him in the same orbs, and the same degrees of velocity, as now ; and yet the sun might have been an opaque and cold body like them. For, as the six primary planets

nets revolve about him, so the secondary ones are moved about them ; the Moon about the earth, the satellites about Jupiter, and others about Saturn; the one as regularly as the other, in the same sesquilateral proportion of the times of their periodical revolutions to the semidiameters of their orbs. So that, though we suppose the present existence and conservation of the system, yet the Sun might have been a body without light or heat, of the same kind with the earth, and Jupiter, and Saturn. But then what horrid darkness and desolation must have reigned in the world ! It had been unfit for the divine purposes in creating vegetable, and sensitive, and rational creatures. It was therefore the contrivance and choice of a *wise and good* Being, that the central Sun should be a lucid body, to communicate warmth, and light, and life to the planets around him.

II. We have shewed in our last, that the concentric revolutions of the planets about the Sun proceed from a compound motion ; a gravitation towards the Sun, which is a constant energy infused into matter by the Author of all things, and a projected transverse impulse in tangents to their several orbs, that was impressed at first by the divine arm, and will carry them around till the end of the world. But now, admitting that gravity may be essential to matter, and that a transverse
s impulse

impulse might be acquired too by natural causes; yet, to make all the planets move about the Sun in circular orbs, there must be given to each a determinate impulse; these present particular degrees of velocity which they now have, in proportion to their distances from the Sun and to the quantity of the solar matter. For had the velocities of the several planets been greater or less than they are now, at the same distances from the Sun; or had their ^a distances from the Sun, or the quantity of the Sun's matter, and consequently his attractive power, been greater or less than they are now, with the same velocities; they would not have revolved in concentric circles as they do, but have moved in hyperbolas, or in ellipses very eccentric. The same may be said of the velocities of the secondary planets with respect to their distances from the centres of their orbs, and to the quantities of the matter of those central bodies. Now that all these distances, and motions, and quantities of matter should be so accurately and harmoniously adjusted in this great variety of our system, is above the fortuitous hits of blind material causes, and must certainly flow from that eternal fountain of wisdom, the Creator of heaven and earth, who

^a Newton. Philosoph. Natural. Princip. Math.

always

ⁱ *always acts geometrically*, by just and adequate numbers, and weights, and measures. And let us examine it further by our critical rule: Are the present revolutions in circular orbs more beneficial than the other would be? If the planets had moved in those lines above-named, sometimes they would have approached to the Sun as near as the orb of Mercury, and sometimes have exorbitated beyond the distance of Saturn; and some have quite left the Sun without ever returning. Now the very constitution of a planet would be corrupted and destroyed by such a change of the interval between it and the Sun; no living thing could have endured such unspeakable excesses of heat and cold; all the animals of our earth must inevitably have perished, or rather never have been. So that as sure as it is ^k *good, very good*, that human nature should exist; so certain it is that the circular revolutions of the earth, (and planets,) rather than those other motions, which might as possibly have been, do declare not only the power of God, but his *wisdom and goodness*.

III. It is manifest; by our last discourse, that the ethereal spaces are perfectly fluid; they neither assist nor retard, neither guide nor divert the revolutions of the planets,

ⁱ Ὁ Θεὸς αἰὶ γινώσκων. Plat.

^k Gen. i.

which roll through those regions as free and unresisted as if they moved in a *vacuum* : so that any of them might as possibly have moved in opposite courses to the present, and in planes crossing the plane of the ecliptic in any kind of angles. Now, if the system had been fortuitously formed by the convening matter of a chaos, how is it conceivable that all the planets, both primary and secondary, should revolve the same way, from the west to the east, and that in the same plane too, without any considerable variation ? No natural and necessary cause could so determine their motions ; and it is millions of millions of millions odds to an unit in such a cast of a chance. Such an apt and regular harmony, such an admirable order and beauty must deservedly be ascribed to divine art and conduct : especially if we consider, that the smallest planets are situated nearest the Sun and each other ; whereas Jupiter and Saturn, that are vastly greater than the rest, and have many satellites about them, are wisely removed to the extreme regions of the system, and placed at an immense distance one from the other. For even now at this wide interval they are observed in their conjunctions to disturb one another's motions a little by their gravitating powers : but if such vast masses of matter had been situated much nearer to the Sun, or
to

to each other, (as they might as easily have been, for any mechanical or fortuitous agent,) they must necessarily have caused a considerable disturbance and disorder in the whole system.

IV. But let us consider the particular situation of our earth, and its distance from the sun. It is now placed so conveniently, that plants thrive and flourish in it, and animals live; this is matter of fact, and beyond all dispute. But how came it to pass at the beginning; that the earth moved in its present orb? We have shewn before, that if gravity and a projected motion be fitly proportioned, any planet would freely revolve at any assignable distance within the space of the whole system. Was it mere chance then, or divine counsel and choice, that constituted the earth in its present situation? To know this; we will enquire if this particular distance from the Sun be better for our earth and its creatures, than a greater or less would have been. We may be mathematically certain, that the heat of the Sun is according to the density of the sun-beams, and is reciprocally proportional to the square of the distance from the body of the Sun. ¹ Now by this calculation, suppose the earth should be removed and placed nearer

¹ Newton, *ibid.* p. 415:

to the Sun, and revolve for instance in the orbit of Mercury; there the whole ocean would even boil with extremity of heat, and be all exhaled into vapours; all plants and animals would be scorched and consumed in that fiery furnace. But suppose the earth should be carried to the great distance of Saturn; there the whole globe would be one frigid zone; the deepest seas under the very equator would be frozen to the bottom; there would be no life, no germination, nor any thing that comes now under our knowledge or senses. It was much better therefore, that the earth should move where it does, than in a much greater or less interval from the body of the Sun. And if you place it at any other distance, either less or more than Saturn or Mercury, you will still alter it for the worse proportionally to the change. It was situated therefore where it is by the wisdom of some voluntary agent, and not by the blind motions of fortune or fate. If any one should think with himself, how then can any animal at all live in Mercury and Saturn in such intense degrees of heat and cold? let him only consider, that the matter of each planet may have a different density, and texture, and form, which will dispose and qualify it to be acted on by greater or less degrees of heat according to their several situations; and that the

the laws of vegetation, and life, and sustenance, and propagation, are the arbitrary pleasure of God, and may vary in all planets according to the divine appointment and the exigencies of things, in manners incomprehensible to our imaginations. It is enough for our purpose to discern the tokens of wisdom in the placing of our earth; if its present constitution would be spoiled and destroyed, if we could not wear flesh and blood, if we could not have human nature at those different distances.

V. We have all learnt from the doctrine of the sphere, that the earth revolves with a double motion. For, while it is carried around the sun in the *orbis magnus* once a year, it perpetually wheels about its own axis once in a day and a night; so that in twenty-four hours space it hath turned all the parts of the equinoctial to the rays of the sun. Now the uses of this vertiginous motion are very conspicuous; for this is it that gives day and night successively over the face of the whole earth, and makes it habitable all around. Without this diurnal rotation one hemisphere would lie dead and torpid in perpetual darkness and frost, and the best part of the other would be burnt up and depopulated by so permanent a heat. It is better therefore, that the earth should often move about its own
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centre,

centre, and make these useful vicissitudes of night and day, than expose always the same side to the action of the sun. But how came it to be so moved? Not from any necessity of the laws of motion, or the system of the heavens: it might annually have compassed the sun, and yet have always turned the same hemisphere towards it. This is matter of fact and experiment in the motion of the moon; which is carried about the earth in the very same manner as the earth about the sun, and yet always shews the same face to us. She indeed, notwithstanding this, turns all her globe to the sun by moving in her menstrual orb, and enjoys night and day alternately, one day of hers being equal to about fourteen days and nights of ours. But, should the earth move in the same manner about the sun as the moon does about the earth, one half of it could never see the day, but must eternally be condemned to solitude and darkness. That the earth therefore frequently revolves about its own centre, is another eminent token of the divine wisdom and goodness.

VI. But let us compare the mutual proportion of these diurnal and annual revolutions; for they are distinct from one another, and have a different degree of velocity. The earth rolls once about its axis in a natural day: in which time all the parts of the equator

tor move something more than three of the earth's diameters; which makes about 1100 in the space of a year. But within the same space of a year the centre of the earth is carried above fifty times as far once round the *orbis magnus*, whose wideness we now assume to be 20000 terrestrial diameters. So that the annual motion is more than fifty times swifter than the diurnal rotation, though we measure the latter from the equator, where the celerity is the greatest. ^m But it must needs be acknowledged, since the earth revolves not upon a material and rugged, but a geometrical plane, that the proportions of the diurnal and annual motions may be varied in innumerable degrees; any of which might have happened as probably as the present. What was it then that prescribed this particular celerity to each motion; this proportion and temperament between them both? Let us examine it by our former rule, if there be any *meliority* in the present constitution; if any considerable change would be for the worse. We will suppose then, that the *annual* motion is accelerated doubly; so that a periodical revolution would be performed in six months. Such a change would be pernicious; not only because the earth could not move in a circular

^m Tacquet de Circulorum Volutionibus.

orb, which we have considered before; but because, the seasons being then twice as short as they are now, the cold winter would overtake us before our corn and fruits could possibly be ripe. But shall this motion be as much retarded, and the seasons lengthened in the same proportion? This too would be as fatal as the other; for in most countries the earth would be so parched and effete by the drought of the summer, that it would afford still but one harvest, as it doth at the present; which then would not be a sufficient store for the consumption of a year, that would be twice as long as now. But let us suppose, that the *diurnal* rotation be either considerably swifter or slower. And first, let it be retarded; so as to make (for example) but twelve circuits in a year: then every day and night would be as long as thirty are now, not so fitly proportioned neither to the common affairs of life, nor to the exigencies of sleep and sustenance in a constitution of flesh and blood. But, let it then be accelerated, and wheel a thousand times about its centre, while the centre describes one circle about the sun: then an equinoctial day would consist but of four hours, which would be an inconvenient change to the inhabitants of the earth; such hasty nights as those would give very unwelcome interruptions to our labours and journeys,

neys, and other transactions of the world. It is *better* therefore, that the diurnal and annual motions should be so proportioned as they are. Let it therefore be ascribed to the transcendent wisdom and benignity of that God, *who hath made all things very good, and loveth all things that he hath made.*

VII. But let us consider, not the quantity and proportion only, but the mode also of this diurnal motion. You must conceive an imaginary plane, which, passing through the centres of the sun and the earth, extends itself on all sides as far as the firmament : this plane is called the ecliptic ; and, in this, the centre of the earth is perpetually carried without any deviation. But then the axis of the earth, about which its diurnal rotation is made, is not erect to this plane of the ecliptic, but inclines toward it from the perpendiculum, in an angle of twenty-three degrees and a half. Now, why is the axis of the earth in this particular posture, rather than any other ? Did it happen by chance, or proceed from design ? To determine this question, let us see, as we have done before, if this be more beneficial to us than any other constitution. We all know, from the very elements of astronomy, that this inclined position of the axis, which keeps always the same direction and a constant parallelism to itself, is the sole cause of these grateful

ful and needful vicissitudes of the four seasons of the year, and the variation in length of days. If we take away the *inclination*, it would absolutely undo these northern nations; the sun would never come nearer us than he doth now on the tenth of March or twelfth of September. But would we rather part with the *parallelism*? Let us suppose then, that the axis of the earth keeps always the same inclination toward the body of the sun: this indeed would cause a variety of days, and nights, and seasons on the earth; but then every particular country would have always the same diversity of day and night, and the same constitution of season without any alteration: some would always have long nights and short days, others again perpetually long days and short nights; one climate would be scorched and sweltered with everlasting dog-days, while an eternal December blasted another: this surely is not quite so good as the present order of seasons. But, shall the axis rather observe no constant inclination to any thing, but vary and waver at uncertain times and places? This would be a happy constitution indeed. There could be no health, no life, nor subsistence in such an irregular system; by those surprising nods of the pole we might be tossed backward or forward in a moment from January to June; nay, possibly, from

from the January of Greenland to the June of Abyssinia. It is *better* therefore, upon all accounts, that the axis should be continued in its present posture and direction : so that this also is a signal character of divine wisdom and goodness.

But, because several have imagined, that this skue posture of the axis is a most unfortunate and pernicious thing ; that, if the poles had been erect to the plane of the ecliptic, all mankind would have enjoyed a very paradise upon earth, a perpetual spring, an eternal calm and serenity, and the longevity of Methuselah without pains or diseases ; we are obliged to consider it a little further. And first, as to the *universal and perpetual spring*, it is a mere poetical fancy, and (bating the equality of days and nights, which is a thing of small value) as to the other properties of a spring, it is naturally impossible, being repugnant to the very form of the globe : for, to those people that dwell under or near the equator, this spring would be a most pestilent and insupportable summer ; and as for those countries that are nearer the poles, in which number are our own and the most considerable nations of the world, a perpetual spring will not do their business ; they must have longer days, a nearer approach of the sun, and a less obliquity of his rays ; they must have

have a summer and a harvest time too, to ripen their grain, and fruits, and vines, or else they must bid an eternal adieu to the very best of their sustenance. It is plain, that the centre of the earth must move all along in the *orbis magnus*; whether we suppose a perpetual equinox, or an oblique position of the axis. So that the whole globe would continue in the same distance from the sun, and receive the same quantity of heat from him in a year or any assignable time, in either hypothesis. Though the axis then had been perpendicular, yet take the whole year about, and the earth would have had the same measure of heat that it has now. So that here lies the question, whether is more beneficial, that the inhabitants of the earth should have the yearly quantity of heat distributed equally every day, or so disposed as it is; a greater share of it in summer, and in winter a less? It must needs be allowed, that the temperate zones have no heat to spare in summer; it is very well if it be sufficient for the maturation of fruits. Now, this being granted, it is as certain and manifest, that an even distribution of the yearly heat would never have brought those fruits to maturity, as this is a known and familiar experiment, that such a quantity of fuel all kindled at once will cause water to boil, which being lighted gradually and successively will
never

never be able to do it. It is clear therefore, that in the constitution of a perpetual equinox the best part of the globe would be desolate and useless; and, as to that little that could be inhabited, there is no reason to expect, that it would constantly enjoy that admired *calm and serenity*. If the assertion were true, yet some perhaps may think, that such a felicity, as would make navigation impossible, is not much to be envied. But it is altogether precarious, and has no necessary foundation neither upon reason nor experience. For the winds and rains and other affections of the atmosphere do not solely depend (as that assertion supposeth) upon the course of the sun; but partly, and perhaps most frequently, upon steams and exhalations from subterraneous heat; upon the positions of the moon, the situations of seas, or mountains, or lakes, or woods, and many other unknown or uncertain causes. So that, though the course of the sun should be invariable, and never swerve from the equator; yet the temperament of the air would be mutable nevertheless, according to the absence or presence, or various mixture of the other causes. The ancient philosophers, for many ages together, unanimously taught, that the torrid zone was not habitable. The reasons that they went upon were very specious and probable, till the experience of these

these latter ages evinced them to be erroneous. They argued from celestial causes only, the constant vicinity of the sun, and the directness of his rays; never suspecting, that the body of the earth had so great an efficiency in the changes of the air; and that then could be the coldest and rainiest season, the winter of the year, when the sun was the nearest of all, and steered directly over men's heads. Which is warning sufficient to deter any man from expecting such eternal serenity and halcyon days from so incompetent and partial a cause, as the constant course of the sun in the equinoctial circle. What general condition and temperament of air would follow upon that supposition we cannot possibly define; for it is not caused by certain and regular motions, nor subject to mathematical calculations. But, if we may make a conjecture from the present constitution, we shall hardly wish for a perpetual equinox to save the charges of weather-glasses: for, it is very well known, that the months of March and September, the two equinoxes of our year, are the most windy and tempestuous, the most unsettled and unequable of seasons in most countries of the world. Now, if this notion of an uniform calm and serenity be false or precarious, then even the last supposed advantage, the *constant health and longevity* of men, must

must be given up also, as a groundless conceit : for this (according to the assertors themselves) doth solely, as an effect of nature, depend upon the other. Nay, further, though we should allow them their perpetual calm and equability of heat, they will never be able to prove, that therefore men would be so vivacious as they would have us believe. Nay, perhaps the contrary may be inferred, if we may argue from present experience: for the inhabitants of the torrid zone, who suffer the least and shortest recesses of the sun, and are within one step and degree of a perpetual equinox, are not only shorter lived (generally speaking) than other nations nearer the poles; but inferior to them in strength, and stature, and courage, and in all the capacities of the mind. It appears therefore, that the gradual vicissitudes of heat and cold are so far from shortening the thread of man's life, or impairing his intellectual faculties, that very probably they both prolong the one in some measure, and exalt and advance the other. So that still we do profess to adore the divine wisdom and goodness for this variety of seasons, for *seed-time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter.*

VIII. Come we now to consider the at-

^a Gen. viii.

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mosphere,

mosphere, and the exterior frame and face of the globe, if we may find any tracks and footsteps of wisdom in the constitution of them. I need not now inform you, that the air is a thin fluid body, endued with elasticity or springiness, and capable of condensation and rarefaction; and, should it be much more expanded or condensed than it naturally is, no animals could live and breathe: it is probable also that the vapours could not be duly raised and supported in it; which at once would deprive the earth of all its ornament and glory, of all its living inhabitants and vegetables too. But it is certainly known and demonstrated, that the condensation and expansion of any portion of the air is always proportional to the weight and pressure incumbent upon it: so that if the atmosphere had been either much greater or less than it is, as it might easily have been, it would have had in its lowest region on the surface of the earth a much greater density or tenuity of texture, and consequently have been unserviceable for vegetation and life. It must needs therefore be an intelligent Being that could so justly adapt it to those excellent purposes. It is concluded by astronomers, that the atmosphere of the moon hath no clouds nor rains,

* See Mr. Boyle of the Air.

but

but a perpetual and uniform serenity ; because nothing discoverable in the lunar surface is ever covered and absconded from us by the interposition of any clouds or mists, but such as rise from our own globe. Now, if the atmosphere of our earth had been of such a constitution, there could nothing, that now grows or breathes in it, have been formed or preserved ; human nature must have been quite obliterated out of the works of creation. If our air had not been a springy elastical body, no animal could have exercised the very function of respiration ; and yet the ends and uses of respiration are not served by that springiness, but by some other unknown and singular quality. ^p For the air, that in exhausted receivers of air-pumps is exhaled from minerals, and flesh, and fruits, and liquors, is as true and genuine as to elasticity and density, or rarefaction, as that we respire in ; and yet this factitious air is so far from being fit to be breathed in, that it kills animals in a moment, even sooner than the very absence of all air, than a vacuum itself. All which do infer the most admirable providence of the Author of nature, who foreknew the necessity of rains and dews to the present structure of plants,

^p Mr. Boyle's second continuation of Physico-mechanical Experiments about the Air.

and the uses of respiration to animals; and therefore created those correspondent properties in the atmosphere of the earth.

IX. In the next place let us consider the ample provision of waters, those inexhausted treasures of the ocean: and, though some have grudged the great share that it takes of the surface of the earth, yet we shall propose this too as a conspicuous mark and character of the wisdom of God. For that we may not now say, that the vast Atlantic ocean is really greater riches, and of more worth to the world, than if it was changed into a fifth continent; and that the dry land is as yet much too big for its inhabitants; and that, before they shall want room by increasing and multiplying, there may be *new heavens and a new earth*: we dare venture to affirm, that these copious stores of waters are no more than necessary for the present constitution of our globe. For, is not the whole substance of all vegetables mere modified water? and consequently of all animals too; all which either feed upon vegetables, or prey upon one another. Is not an immense quantity of it continually exhaled by the sun, to fill the atmosphere with vapours and clouds, and feed the plants of the earth with the balm of dews,

^a *Et mare, quod late terrarum distinet oras.* Lucret.

and

and the fatness of showers ? It seems incredible at first hearing, that all the blood in our bodies should circulate in a trice, in a very few minutes ; but, I believe it would be more surprising, if we knew the short and swift periods of the great circulation of water, that vital blood of the earth, which composeth and nourisheth all things. If we could but compute that prodigious mass of it that is daily thrown into the channel of the sea from all the rivers of the world ; we should then know and admire how much is perpetually evaporated and cast again upon the continents to supply those innumerable streams. And indeed hence we may discover, not only the *use* and *necessity*, but the *cause* too of the vastness of the ocean. I never yet heard of any nation that complained they had too broad, or too deep, or too many rivers ; or wished they were either smaller or fewer ; they understand better than so, how to value and esteem those inestimable gifts of nature. Now, supposing that the multitude and largeness of rivers ought to continue as great as now, we can easily prove that the extent of the ocean could be no less than it is. For it is evident and necessary, (if we follow the most fair and probable hypothesis, that the origin of fountains is from vapours and rain,) that the receptacle of waters, into which the mouths of all those

rivers must empty themselves, ought to have so spacious a surface, that as much water may be continually brushed off by the winds and exhaled by the sun, as (besides what falls again in showers upon its own surface) is brought into it by all the rivers. Now the surface of the ocean is just so wide, and no wider : for, if more was evaporated than returns into it again, the sea would become less ; if less was evaporated, it would grow bigger. So that, because since the memory of all ages it hath continued at a stand without considerable variation ; and if it hath gained ground upon one country, hath lost as much in another ; it must consequently be exactly proportioned to the present constitution of rivers. How rash therefore and vain are those busy projectors in speculation, that imagine they could recover to the world many new and noble countries, in the most happy and temperate climates, without any damage to the old ones, could this same mass of the ocean be lodged and circumscribed in a much deeper channel, and within narrower shores ! For, by how much they would diminish the present extent of the sea, so much they would impair the fertility, and fountains, and rivers of the earth ; because the quantity of vapours, that must be exhaled to supply all these, would be lessened proportionally to the bounds of the ocean ;

ocean ; for the vapours are not to be measured from the bulk of the water, but from the space of the surface. So that this also doth infer the superlative wisdom and goodness of God, that he hath treasured up the waters in so deep and spacious a storehouse, *the place that he hath founded and appointed for them.*

X. * But some men are out of love with the features and mien of our earth ; they do not like this rugged and irregular surface, these precipices and valleys, and the gaping channel of the ocean. This with them is deformity, and rather carries the face of a ruin, or a rude and indigested lump of atoms that casually convened so, than a work of divine artifice. They would have the vast body of a planet to be as elegant and round as a factitious globe represents it ; to be every where smooth and equable, and as plain as the Elysian fields. Let us examine what weighty reasons they have to disparage the present constitution of nature in so injurious a manner. Why, if we suppose the ocean to be dry, and

* Psal. cxxiv.

* *Nequaquam nobis divinitus esse creatam
Naturam rerum, tanta stat prædita culpa.
Principio, quantum cæli tegit impetus ingens,
Inde avidam partem montes sylvæque ferarum
Possedere, tenent rupes, vastæque paludes,
Et mare, quod late terrarum distinet oras.*

Lucret. lib. v.

that we look down upon the empty channel from some higher region of the air, how horrid, and ghastly, and unnatural would it look ! Now, admitting this supposition, let us suppose too that the soil of this dry channel were covered with grafs and trees in manner of the continent, and then see what would follow. If a man could be carried asleep and placed in the very middle of this dry ocean, it must be allowed that he could not distinguish it from the inhabited earth. For if the bottom should be unequal, with shelves, and rocks, and precipices, and gulfs ; these, being now appared with a vesture of plants, would only resemble the mountains and valleys that he was accustomed to before. But very probably he would wake in a large and smooth plain : for though the bottom of the sea were gradually inclined and sloping from the shore to the middle, yet the additional acclivity, above what a level would seem to have, would be imperceptible in so short a prospect as he could take of it : so that, to make this man sensible what a deep cavity he was placed in, he must be carried so high in the air till he could see at one view the whole breadth of the channel, and so compare the depression of the middle with the elevation of the banks. But then a very small skill in mathematics is enough to instruct us, that, before he could arrive to that distance
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from the earth, all the inequality of surface would be lost to his view: the wide ocean would appear to him like an even and uniform plane, (uniform as to its level, though not as to light and shade,) though every rock of the sea was as high as the Pico of Teneriff. But, though we should grant that the dry gulf of the ocean would appear vastly hollow and horrible from the top of a high cloud, yet what a way of reasoning is this from the freaks of imagination, and impossible suppositions? Is the sea ever likely to be evaporated by the sun, or to be emptied with buckets? Why then must we fancy this impossible dryness; and then upon that fictitious account calumniate nature, as deformed and ruinous, and unworthy of a divine Author? Is there then any physical deformity in the fabric of a human body, because our imagination can strip it of its muscles and skin, and shew us the scragged and knotty backbone, the gaping and ghastly jaws, and all the skeleton underneath? We have shewed before, that the sea could not be much narrower than it is, without a great loss to the world: and must we now have an ocean of mere flats and shallows, to the utter ruin of navigation, for fear our heads should turn giddy at the imagination of gaping abysses and unfathomable gulfs? But however, they may say, the sea-shores at least might

might have been even and uniform, not crooked and broken as they are into innumerable angles, and creeks, and inlets, and bays, without beauty or order, which carry the marks more of chance and confusion, than of the production of a wise Creator. And would not this be a fine bargain indeed? to part with all our commodious ports and harbours, which the greater the inlet is are so much the better, for the imaginary pleasure of an open and straight shore without any retreat or shelter from the winds; which would make the sea of no use at all as to navigation and commerce. But what apology can we make for the horrid deformity of rocks and crags, of naked and broken cliffs, of long ridges of barren mountains, in the convenientest latitudes for habitation and fertility, could but those rude heaps of rubbish and ruins be removed out of the way? We have one general and sufficient answer for all seeming defects or disorders in the constitution of land or sea; that we do not contend to have the earth pass for a paradise, or to make a very heaven of our globe; we reckon it only as the land of our *peregrination*, and aspire after '*a better, and a celestial country*. It is enough, if it be so framed and constituted, that by a careful

^t Heb. xi.

contem-

contemplation of it we have great reason to acknowledge and adore the divine wisdom and benignity of its Author. But, to wave this general reply, let the objectors consider, that these supposed irregularities must necessarily come to pass from the established laws of mechanism and the ordinary course of nature. For, supposing the existence of sea and mountains, if the banks of that sea must never be jagged and torn by the impetuous assaults or the silent underminings of waves; if violent rains and tempests must not wash down the earth and gravel from the tops of some of those mountains, and expose their naked ribs to the face of the sun; if the seeds of subterraneous minerals must not ferment, and sometimes cause earthquakes and furious eruptions of volcanos, and tumble down broken rocks, and lay them in confusion; then either all things must have been overruled miraculously by the immediate interposition of God, without any mechanical affections or settled laws of nature, or else the body of the earth must have been as fixed as gold, or as hard as adamant, and wholly unfit for human habitation. "So that if it *was good* in the sight of God, that the present plants and animals, and human souls united to flesh and blood, should be

" Gen. i.

upon this earth under a settled constitution of nature; these supposed inconveniences, as they were foreseen and permitted by the Author of that nature, as necessary consequences of such a constitution, so they cannot infer the least imperfection in his wisdom and goodness: and to murmur at them is as unreasonable as to complain that he hath made us men and not angels; that he hath placed us upon this planet, and not upon some other, in this or another system, which may be thought better than ours. Let them also consider, that this objected deformity is in our imaginations only, and not really in things themselves. There is no universal reason (I mean such as is not confined to human fancy, but will reach through the whole intellectual universe) that a figure by us called regular, which hath equal sides and angles, is absolutely more beautiful than any irregular one. All pulchritude is relative; and all bodies are truly and physically beautiful under all possible shapes and proportions, that are good in their kind, that are fit for their proper uses and ends of their natures. We ought not then to believe, that the banks of the ocean are really deformed, because they have not the form of a regular bulwark; nor that the mountains are out of shape, because they are not exact pyramids or cones; nor that the
stars

stars are unskilfully placed, because they are not all situated at uniform distance. These are not natural irregularities, but with respect to our fancies only; nor are they incommodious to the true uses of life and the designs of man's being on the earth. And let them further consider, that these ranges of barren mountains, by condensing the vapours, and producing rains, and fountains, and rivers, give the very plains and valleys themselves that fertility they boast of; that those hills and mountains supply us and the stock of nature with a great variety of excellent plants. If there were no inequalities in the surface of the earth, nor in the seasons of the year, we should lose a considerable share of the vegetable kingdom: for all plants will not grow in an uniform level and the same temper of soil, nor with the same degree of heat. Nay, let them lastly consider, that to those hills and mountains we are obliged for all our metals, and with them for all the conveniences and comforts of life. To deprive us of metals is to make us mere savages; to change our corn or rice for the old Arcadian diet, our houses and cities for dens and caves, and our clothing for skins of beasts; it is to bereave us of all arts and sciences, of history and letters; nay, of revealed religion too, that inestimable favour

your

vour of heaven: for, without the benefit of letters, the whole Gospel would be a mere tradition and old cabbala, without certainty, without authority. Who would part with these solid and substantial blessings for the little fantastical pleasantness of a smooth uniform convexity and rotundity of a globe? And yet the misfortune of it is, that the pleasant view of their imaginary globe, as well as the deformed spectacle of our true one, is founded upon impossible suppositions. For that equal convexity could never be seen and enjoyed by any man living. The inhabitants of such an earth could have only the short prospect of a little circular plane about three miles around them; though neither woods, nor hedges, nor artificial banks should intercept it: which little too would appear to have an acclivity on all sides from the spectators; so that every man would have the displeasure of fancying himself the lowest, and that he always dwelt and moved in a bottom: Nay, considering that in such a constitution of the earth they could have no means nor instruments of mathematical knowledge, there is great reason to believe, that the period of the final dissolution might overtake them, ere they would have known or had any suspicion that they walked upon a round ball. Must we therefore, to make

make this convexity of the earth discernible to the eye, suppose a man to be lifted up a great height in the air, that he may have a very spacious horizon under one view ? But then again, because of the distance, the convexity and gibbousness would vanish away ; he would only see below him a great circular flat, as level, to his thinking, as the face of the moon. Are there then such ravishing charms in a dull unvaried flat, to make a sufficient compensation *for the chief things of the ancient mountains, and for the precious things of the lasting hills* ? Nay, we appeal to the sentence of mankind, *if a land of hills and valleys* has not more pleasure too and beauty than an uniform flat ? which flat, if ever it may be said to be very delightful, is then only, when it is viewed from the top of a hill. What were the Tempe of Theffaly, so celebrated in ancient story for their unparalleled pleasantness, but a vale divided with a river and terminated with hills ? Are not all the descriptions of poets embellished with such ideas, when they would represent any places of superlative delight, any blissful seats of the muses or the nymphs, any sacred habitations of gods or goddesses ? They will never admit that a wide flat can be pleasant, no not in the

* Deut. xxxiii. 15.

† Vide Ælian. Var. Hist. lib. iii.

very Elyfian fields"; but thefe too muft be diversified with depressed valleys and fwelling afcents. They cannot imagine ^a even paradise to be a place of pleafure, nor heaven itfelf to be ^b heaven without them. Let this therefore be another argument of the divine wifdom and goodnefs, that the furface of the earth is not uniformly convex, (as many think it would naturally have been, if mechanically formed by a chaos,) but diftinguifhed with mountains and valleys, and furrowed from pole to pole with the deep channel of the fea; and that, becaufe of the *τὸ βελτίον*, it is better that it fhould be fo.

Give me leave to make one short inference from what has been said, which shall finish this present discourse, and with it our task for the year. We have clearly discovered many final causes and characters of wisdom and contrivance in the frame of the inanimate

² *At pater Anchisēs penitus convalle virenti.* Virg. Æn. vi.

Hoc superate jugum.— Ibid.

Et tumulum capit.— Ibid.

Flowers worthy of paradise, which not nice art
In beds and curious knots, but nature boon
Pour'd forth profuse on hill, and dale, and plain.

Paradise Lost, book iv.

For earth hath this variety from heaven
Of pleasure situate in hill and dale.

Paradise Lost, book vi.

the

world; as well as in the organical fabric of the bodies of animals. Now, from hence ariseth a new and invincible argument, that the present frame of the world hath not existed from all eternity. For such a usefulness of things, or a fitness of means to ends, as neither proceeds from the necessity of their beings, nor can happen to them by chance, doth necessarily infer that there was an intelligent Being, which was the author and contriver of that usefulness. * We have formerly demonstrated; that the body of a man, which consists of an incomprehensible variety of parts, all admirably fitted for their peculiar functions and the conservation of the whole, could no more be formed fortuitously than the *Æneis* of Virgil, or any other long poem with good sense and just measures, could be composed by the casual combinations of letters. Now, to pursue this comparison; as it is utterly impossible to be believed, that such a poem may have been eternal, transcribed from copy to copy without any first author and original; so it is equally incredible and impossible, that the fabric of human bodies, which hath such excellent and divine artifice, and, if I may so say, such good sense and true syntax and harmonious measures in its constitution, should be propagated and transcribed

* Serm. v.

from father to son without a first parent and creator of it. An eternal usefulness of things, an eternal good sense, cannot possibly be conceived without an eternal wisdom and understanding. But that can be no other than that eternal and omnipotent God ; ^d *that by wisdom hath founded the earth, and by understanding hath established the heavens :* to whom be all honour, and glory, and praise, and adoration, from henceforth and for evermore. Amen,

^d Prov. iii.

OF REVELATION AND THE MESSIAS:

A

SERMON,

PREACHED AT THE

Public Commencement at Cambridge,

July 5th, 1696.

1 Pet. iii. 15.

Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you.

BY the *hope that is in us*, we do understand here, as in other places of Scripture, not only the bare hope strictly so called, but the faith too of a Christian. Whence it is, that in the Syriac version of the text, and in some ancient Latin copies, the word faith is added to the other; *the hope and the faith that is in you*. And indeed, if we consider hope as a natural passion, we shall find it to be always attended

and ushered in by faith. For, it is certain there is no hope without some antecedent belief that the thing hoped for may come to pass ; and the strength and steadiness of our hope is ever proportional to the measure of our faith. It appears therefore why the word hope in the text may with sufficient propriety of speech comprehend the whole faith of a Christian ; and that, when the Apostle exhorts us *to be ready always to answer every man that asks the reason of our hope*, it is the same, as if he enjoined us to be never unprepared nor unwilling to reply to any doubts or questions about the grounds of the Christian faith.

At the date of this epistle the whole world (with relation to the text) might be considered under one general division, Jews and Gentiles. First, the Jews, *to whom the oracles of God were committed*, and who from thence had the information and expectation of the Messiah. These, when they asked a Christian the reason of his hope, were themselves already persuaded that the Messiah would come : and the only controversy between them was, Whether Jesus was he ? according to the message of John the Baptist, *Was Jesus he that should come, or must they look for another ?*

• Rom. iii. 2.

† Luke vii. 19.

Secondly,

Secondly, the Gentiles, who having no means of knowledge besides mere natural reason, could have no notions nor notices of this expected Messias: these therefore, when they demanded the reason of a Christian's hope, were first to be acquainted with the purpose and promise of God to send the Messias; were to be instructed about the reasons and designs of that great embassy; about his quality and office, and all the circumstances of his person: and then was the proper time to shew, that Jesus was he; that the description of the Messias was truly exhibited and represented in his character; and the ancient prophecies all accomplished in his actions and events.

It is not for nothing that the Apostle presseth this advice in the text, *Be ready always to give a reason of the hope that is in you:* as if he had foretold, that there would be no age of the Christian world, wherein this preparation would be superfluous. It hath pleased the divine wisdom never yet to leave Christianity wholly at leisure from opposers; but to give its professors that perpetual exercise of their industry and zeal. And who can tell, if, without such adversaries to rouse and quicken them, they might not in long tract of time have grown remiss in the duties, and ignorant in the doctrines of religion? Perhaps before this time even some of the records of it might

have perished by men's negligence: as the Jews had like to have lost their law, if divine Providence had not preserved one copy of it in the temple. It is ^a *while men sleep*, while they live in peace and security, and have no enemies to contest with, that the great *enemy comes and sows tares among the wheat*. But, of all the ages since the coming of Christ, I suppose this present has least reason to complain for want of work and employment in defence of religion. Here are not only the two parties in the text, Jews and Gentiles, still in the world to engage with; but even in the midst of Christianity are the most dangerous designs formed against it: as if our Saviour's prediction of particular families were to be verified too of the whole church, ^b *that its worst enemies should be they of its own household*.

There are a sort of persons baptized indeed into the Christian faith, and educated in the profession of it: but in secret, I wish I might say so, nay even openly they oppose and blaspheme it; repudiating at once the whole authority of revelation, and debasing the sacred volumes to the rank of ordinary books of history and ethics. The being of God and a Providence they profess to believe; to ac-

^a Matth. xiii. 25.^b Matth. x. 36.

knowledge

knowledge a difference between good and evil; to be verily persuaded of another life to come; and to have their expectations of that state, as their behaviour is in this. Nay, even the whole system of Christian morals they can willingly embrace; but not as a collection of divine statutes and ordinances sent us by an express from heaven, but only as useful rules of life, discoverable by plain reason, and agreeable to natural religion. So that they cannot see the mighty occasion that should invite even the eternal Son of God from the bosom of the Father, to act so mean and calamitous a part upon the stage of this sorry world. What need of so great a master to read mankind lectures of morals, which they might easily learn without any teacher? It is true, they are often told of some sublime mysterious doctrines delivered by him, which they own would never have been thought of by natural reason. But then, that is so far from recommending to them the importance of his errand from heaven, that for that very reason they deny the truth of his message. For whatever comes imperiously in the name of divine mystery, and soars above the pitch of human knowledge; whatsoever things they cannot fathom and grasp through all the causes, designs, modes and relations of them, as the notion of the Messias, his incarnation, mediation,

satisfaction ; all these they reject and explode, as incomprehensible to pure reason, which they set up as the only principle and measure of belief.

In all this, these persons act the part, and place themselves in the condition of Gentiles, whom we may imagine, in the text, *to ask the reason of a Christian's hope* ; since the whole body of these men's religion is no more than what even heathens attained to : the modern Deism being the very same with old philosophical Paganism, only aggravated and damned with the additional crime of apostasy from the faith. But, besides this, these very persons will on other occasions personate the Jews too, those other enquirers supposed in the text, and dispute with Jewish objections against the Christian religion ; though they no more believe the matter of those objections, than the thing they object against ; like Celsus and Julian of old, that gathered arguments against the Christians from all the different sects and hypotheses of philosophy, though inconsistent one argument with another ; and brought objections too from the Old Testament, which they did not believe, against the New one, which they were engaged by all methods to oppose.

In our present discourse, therefore, we shall endeavour to refute these modern adversaries
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under their double shape and character : First, as they are mere Deists or Pagans, renouncing all revelation, and the very notion of the Messias ; and, Secondly, as they fight under Jewish colours ; so as admitting there be a promised Messias, the Saviour of the world, yet men ought to reject the person of Jesus, and still to wait for another.

I. And, first, we shall consider them in the quality of Deists and disciples of mere natural reason. We profess ourselves as much concerned, and as truly as themselves are, for the use and authority of reason in controversies of faith. We look upon right reason as the native lamp of the soul, placed and kindled there by our Creator, to conduct us in the whole course of our judgments and actions. True reason, like its divine Author, never is itself deceived, nor ever deceives any man. Even revelation itself is not shy nor unwilling to ascribe its own first credit and fundamental authority to the test and testimony of reason. Sound reason is the touchstone to distinguish that pure and genuine gold from baser metals ; revelation truly divine, from imposture and enthusiasm : so that the Christian religion is so far from declining or fearing the strictest trials of reason, that it every where appeals to it ; is defended and supported by it, and indeed cannot continue, in the Apostle's description,

pure

ⁱ *pure and undefiled* without it. It is the benefit of reason alone, under the Providence and Spirit of God, that we ourselves are at this day a reformed Orthodox Church; that we departed from the errors of Popery, and that we knew too where to stop; neither running into the extravagancies of fanaticism, nor sliding into the indifferency of libertinism. Whatsoever therefore is inconsistent with natural reason, can never be justly imposed as an article of faith. That the same body is in many places at once, that plain bread is not bread; such things, though they be said with never so much pomp, and claim to infallibility, we have still greater authority to reject them, as being contrary to common sense and our natural faculties; as subverting the foundations of all faith, even the grounds of their own credit, and all the principles of civil life.

So far are we from contending with our adversaries about the dignity and authority of reason; but then we differ with them about the exercise of it, and the extent of its province. For the Deists there stop, and set bounds to their faith, where reason, their only guide, does not lead the way further and walk along before them. We on the contrary, as ^k Moses was shewn by divine power a true

ⁱ James i. 27.^k Deut. xxxiv.

fight of the promised land, though himself could not pass over to it ; so we think reason may receive from revelation some further discoveries and new prospects of things, and be fully convinced of the reality of them ; though itself cannot pass on, nor travel those regions ; cannot penetrate the fund of those truths, nor advance to the utmost bounds of them. For there is certainly a wide difference between what is contrary to reason, and what is superior to it, and out of its reach. To give an instance in created nature : how many things are there whose being we cannot doubt of, though unable to comprehend the manner of their being so ? That the human soul is vitally united to the body by a reciprocal commerce of action and passion ; this we all consciously feel and know, and our adversaries will affirm it ; let them tell us then what is the chain, the cement, the magnetism, what they will call it, the invisible tie of that union, whereby matter and an incorporeal mind, things that have no similitude nor alliance to each other, can so sympathize by a mutual league of motion and sensation ? No, they will not pretend to that ; for they can frame no conceptions of it. They are sure there is such an union, from the operations and effects ; but the cause and the manner of it are too subtle and secret, to be discovered by the eye of reason : it is, mystery,

mystery, it is divine magic, it is natural miracle. If then in created beings they are content with us to confess their ignorance of the modes of existence, without doubting of things themselves; have not we much more reason to be humble and modest in speculations about the essence of God; about the reasons of his counsels, and the ways of his actions? Yes certainly; under those circumstances we may believe with reason even things above and beyond reason.

For example: If we have sure ground to believe that such a book is the revelation of God; and we find in it propositions expressed in plain words, of a determinate sense without ambiguity, so as they cannot be otherwise interpreted, by any just metaphor or fair construction allowed in common language; we say we have sufficient reason to assent to those propositions, as divine doctrines and infallible truths, so far as they are declared there, though perhaps we cannot ourselves comprehend, nor demonstrate to others the reasons and the manner of them. Neither is this an easy credulity, or unworthy of the most cautious and morose searcher of truth. For observe, we do not say, any thing incomprehensible to reason is separate and alone a proper object of belief; but as it is supported and established by some other known and comprehensible

reasonable truth : as if Abraham had been told by some ordinary man, that in his and Sarah's decrepit age he should be blessed with a son : this promise, so alone, without its basis to stand on, could not have challenged his assent, because the thing was impossible in the way of nature ; but since it was God Almighty, ¹ *with whom all things are possible*, that was the author of that promise, by the mediation of that certain truth, the veracity and omnipotence of God, without hesitation he believed, and so obtained the glory to be ^m *father of the faithful*. And upon the same grounds the blessed Virgin gave credit to the salutation of the angel, though the message in itself seemed impossible to reason. So true it is, that reason itself warrants us to proceed and advance by faith, even beyond the sphere and regions of reason. We agree then with our adversaries about the authority of reason ; but we dissent about the exercise of it, and the bounds of its jurisdiction. We believe even the abstrusest mysteries of the Christian religion ; of which mysteries perhaps we can assign no reasons, but for our belief we assign a good one ; because they are plainly taught in the word of God, who can neither err nor deceive. And this we affirm to be a reason-

¹ Matt. xix. 26.^m Rom. iv. 11.

able conclusion, though it carry us even to the confines of heaven, beyond the limits of reason. But, if the Deists think to oblige us to give a natural account of those mysteries, without the authority of Scripture; for that we must beg their excuse. We will argue from strict reason, as much as they can pretend to; but we must not submit that our adversaries shall confine us to improper topics and impossible ways of proof.

It appears therefore, that though we should decline and despair to give any account at all of the reasons and methods of God's counsel in the mission of his Son, and only appeal to the sentence of Scripture, yet the Deists ought to be satisfied with that proof, since the doctrine is so expressly taught in the oracles of God. But, besides this, what if even natural light shall discover to us some faint, but yet certain views of that mysterious instance of divine wisdom and goodness; and exhibit to us a rational account, why the Son of God should condescend to be our Mediator and Redeemer? But, before we engage in this attempt, let it be lawful to implore the candour of our friends; if, while we endeavour to win over our enemies, we may seem to some, to do too little; or perhaps to others, to venture too far, and to advance beyond our lines. To discern then some reasons of this wonderful

ful mystery, we must take our prospect from the highest mountain of nature, from the first creation, and origin of human race.

God, who at the beginning viewed all the works of his hands, ^a and *behold, all things were very good*; made man also upright and complete, without any defect in his whole composition; without any original perverseness of soul, or false bias of will or judgment; without any natural obliquity or enormity of inclinations. He made him an intelligent being, to know God and himself; to understand and feel present happiness, and to secure it by consideration and contrivance for the future. He endowed him with liberty of mind, that he might act, not of necessity, nor blind instinct like the brutes; but with consciousness and voluntary choice. He implanted in him diverse appetites and affections, all useful instruments of his happiness, if fitly employed: and none vicious and culpable radically, and in their whole nature, but then only, when they are applied to wrong objects, or in right ones are raised or sunk beside their due temper and measure. I say it again, for the justification of our Creator, that not one of the simple affections of the soul, no not concupiscence, hatred, anger, revenge, are in

^a Gen. i. 31.

themselves

themselves criminal and sinful. Some of the affections, it is true, have very bad names; but those are either mere excesses of simple passions, or else mixed and compound ones, which have no proper real essence, but are only notional terms; as *envy*, for example, a very bad thing indeed; but it is an evil of our own product, and not of God's creating. For the real constituent parts of it are hatred and grief, very useful and lawful affections; but the evil of it is our own; when we entertain that hatred and grief at the good that befalls others; which is what we express by the complex name of envy.

God therefore having so created man, in every capacity pure and perfect, might justly require of him that he should maintain and preserve this original rectitude; that in all his desires, designs and actions, he should constantly adhere to the dictates of reason and nature; so as the least deviation would make him obnoxious to God's displeasure, and nothing less than complete obedience recommend him to his favour: according to the terms proposed to Cain, ° *If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lies at the door.* God, I say, might expect and require of man such a perfect obedience

° Gen. iv. 7.

to the law of nature ; because it was both reasonable and possible for man to perform it. *Reasonable* it was, because every statute of that law promotes the true interest and felicity of mankind, even in the very performance. It is true, in the present posture of human affairs, a man's duty is frequently inconsistent with his temporal interest. *But from the beginning it was not so* : neither would it be now, if the whole world at once could be just and innocent. For it is not my keeping the law, but another's transgressing it, that involves me in any misery. The scope and tendency of the law itself is always mine and every man's advantage. For it is not a thing foreign and alien to our nature, imposed on us purely to try our obedience, but it all results from our very frame and constitution. The general preservation of man's natural good is the sole root and fountain of the moral : the universal profit and pleasure, the public happiness of human life, gives being and denomination to every virtue and vice ; and the true rules and directions to preserve and secure that happiness make up the whole volume, the code and pandect of the law of nature. Without doubt then it was reasonable to obey where nothing was commanded us but to pursue our own interest ; nothing forbidden us but not to do ourselves

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harm.

harm. And, secondly, it was *possible* for man to perform that entire obedience. For since, as we have proved before, all his natural faculties are right and good, and the law itself accommodated and proportioned to those faculties, there appears no necessary intrinsic impediment, why he may not adequately observe it. If every particular precept be possible to be done, it is not absolutely impossible to fulfil the universal. And methinks they, that on other accounts acknowledge that God requires such perfect obedience upon the terms of the law of nature, should be very averse from believing that there is a natural and fundamental insufficiency in man to perform it. For certainly the just God cannot be so importune and unreasonable a master as to enjoin us what is physically impossible ; *to expect to reap where he has not sown, to require bricks without allowance of straw.*

But then, though there was no such original and natural disability in man, yet there arose a moral and circumstantial one ; an accidental incapacity supervening to his nature, an impossibility from event, that ever any person from the beginning of the world to the last period of it (always excepting the *man Christ Jesus*) should be wholly pure and free from the contagion of sin. For, our first parents having fallen from their native state of innocence,

cence, the tincture of evil, like an hereditary disease, infected all their posterity : and the leaven of sin having once corrupted the whole mass of mankind, all the species ever after would be soured and tainted with it ; the vicious ferment perpetually diffusing and propagating itself through all generations. For, let us but consider the state of human life ; first, a perpetual conversation among evil examples, and the strongest principle of our nature, imitation ; and then, the ignorance and prejudices of childhood, the fervour and temerity of youth, the force and the frequency of temptations, and the narrow dubious confines between virtue and vice ; and we may pronounce it impossible, that any man should so govern his steps through all the lubricous paths of life, as never once to slip and fall from his duty. Agreeably to the testimony of Scripture, *which hath concluded all under sin*, Gal. iii. 22. and again, ^p *If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us* ; and again, ^q *Both Jews and Gentiles are all under sin ; all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God*. ^r *Every mouth then be stopped ; and all the world must plead guilty before the tribunal of God ; for by the deeds of the law* (the law of nature as well as

^p 1 John i. 8.^q Rom. iii. 9, 23.^r Rom. iii. 19.

of Moses) *no flesh can be justified in his sight*. It is evident then from the principles of pure reason, beside the authority of Scripture, that upon the Deist's hypothesis, upon the terms of natural religion, no salvation can be obtained; no life and immortality can be expected: for, that being the free offer and favour of God, he might justly set what price he pleased upon it, even the greatest that we can possibly pay; nothing less than entire obedience, than unspotted innocence, than consummate virtue.

Thus far then even reason evinceth, and holds the lamp to revelation. Some means of reconciliation between God and man, the judge and the offender, must be contrived; some vicarious satisfaction to justice, and model of a new covenant; or else the whole bulk of mankind are for ever unhappy. And surely to prevent that, to retrieve a perishing world, was a weighty concern; even of greater importance than the very creating it, and more worthy of the care and consult of Heaven. I say, the care of Heaven; for, alas! here on earth what expedient could man find out? *How could dust and ashes take upon him to speak unto the Lord?* Could any of the sons of Adam presume to be advocate for the rest? himself one of the criminals, himself in want of another advocate? And what friend knew we at the court of heaven,

of

of that high power and favour with God, as to offer his intercession? or so wonderfully kind to us, as to pay our satisfaction? We must freely own to the Deist, that here reason was at a stand; even nature herself languished between hope and despair; and, in the style of the Apostle, *'the whole creation groaned and travelled in pain together*; when behold, (what revelation hath informed and assured us of,) the eternal Son of the Almighty, *'the brightness of the paternal glory, and the express image of his substance*, even he vouchsafed to be our patron and mediator; to take our nature upon him, and to dwell among men; to fulfil that law of righteousness wherein we were deficient; to bear our guilt and our burden upon himself, and to offer his most precious blood as an expiation for our offences, as the seal of a new covenant better than the law of nature; a covenant of more gracious terms, terms of repentance and remission of sins: so that if we truly believe in him, and sincerely endeavour to observe his commands, our imperfect righteousness, through the merits of his sufferings, shall be imputed, accepted, and rewarded, as if it were an entire obedience to the strict law of works and of natural perfection.

^{*} Rom. viii. 22.

[†] Heb. i. 3..

And now I dare presume to ask even our adversaries themselves, what flaws or fallacies they can shew in all this. If it be true then, that reason itself discovers such absolute necessity of some way of reconciliation between God and man; and if it was necessary for man, as being the party concerned, to know the particular way that God did approve and accept of; and if mere reason could never find that out, but revelation alone must and ought to inform us; and lastly, if such revelation be actually made, attested, and promulgated to the world, what pretence is there left, why we should not believe and acquiesce in it? if, upon examination, it bear all the marks of true revelation; if it contain nothing unworthy of itself, and of the wisdom and goodness of its author.

And, is not the economy of man's salvation, as it is set forth in holy Scriptures, every way agreeable to that divine character? No, if we ask our adversaries, it is an improper and unequal method; it is inconsistent with the justice and impartiality of God. *Rex Jupiter omnibus idem.* God, say they, if he had designed such an universal benefit for mankind, would have exhibited it equally and indifferently to every age and nation alike: but the conditions of salvation proposed in the Gospel are incompetent and much too narrow; being
restrained

restrained to those times and countries alone, that can hear of the fame of Jesus, and believe in his person. And what becomes then of all the former ages of men, before he was born? what of those remote nations ever since, that could have no intelligence of him, nor hear the least tidings of Judea and Jerusalem? Must all those myriads of souls perish^u for invincible ignorance, for want of impossible faith? *"For how could they believe on him of whom they had not heard? and how could they hear without a preacher?* And why should the *God of the whole earth, the God that is no respecter of persons,* no nor of nations, be so unaccountably kind, so unjustly fond and partial, to any single country; much less to a little obscure people, the Jews, scarce heard of in the rest of the world till they were captives and slaves in it; and withdraw his paternal love from so many other nations, much more considerable, and more worthy of his providence? ** Is he God of the Jews only? is he not also of the Gentiles?*

This way of discourse we may expect from the Deists; and I hope, according to the advice of the text, we are both *able and ready to give a reply*. For, first, as to that imagined partiality of God, in preferring any one coun-

^u Rom. x. 14.^{*} Rom. iii. 29.

try, before the rest of the world, to be the land of Christ's nativity; what a poor and contemptible cavil! for, upon supposition that the Messias of God was to take human nature upon him, and be born of a woman, must he not of necessity be born in some one particular country, exclusively to all the rest? And is not that then a ridiculous objection against any single country, that may equally be urged against all whatsoever?

Neither was it mere fondness in the Deity, that he chose the obscure land of Palestine for the birthplace of his Son, rather than Greece, or Italy, or Asia, the theatres of art and learning, and the seats of empire: for, not to mention Abraham and the Patriarchs, whose singular faith and piety justly obtained of God that their posterity should have the *adoption and the glory, and the covenants and the promises, and the consanguinity of Christ*; it appears also from event, that the circumstances of that nation were of all others the most suitable to the design of the Messias. For, since it was fit and necessary that prophecies should foretel of him long before his coming; that his pedigree and extraction should be accurately deduced through a long series of ancestors, and other such marks be

Y Rom. ix. 4.

assigned

assigned of him, that men might know, this was he; what more proper to those purposes than the state of the Jews, that *peculiar people*, secluded and distinguished one tribe from another, and the whole from all the rest of mankind, by the very frame of their polity? so that the genealogies were less confused, the histories and prophecies more faithfully recorded, and the accomplishment of all more certain and illustrious than they could have been in any other nation upon earth; all of which, within that long compass of time, were blended together by mutual commerce and mutual conquest, and other omnifarious causes of mixture and confusion.

And then, as to that other surmise, that God would have proposed fair and equal means of general salvation, and not upon such narrow and insufficient terms as an actual faith in the person of Jesus; a condition impossible to the much greater part of mankind: we acknowledge it to be true, infallibly true; faith in Christ Jesus the only way to salvation since the preaching of the Gospel: so as whosoever rejects that when it is duly declared to him, and refuses his assent and obedience to it, can have no portion in the kingdom of heaven. But, for those that never once heard of the Lord of life, that is an undecided case, which we do not determine.

For

For who has authority to give sentence, where God and Scripture are silent? Thus far we are assured there, that let the future condition of those be as God pleases, at least he will not condemn them for invincible ignorance: ² *for there is no respect of persons with him; but as many as have sinned without law, shall perish without law.* The meaning whereof is, that the Gentile world shall not be judged and condemned for the breach of the law of Moses, which never was given them; but for sins against the law of nature, and the common light of conscience. We may infer then by parity of argument, that as *many as shall sin without the Gospel, shall perish without the Gospel*; that is, not because they believed not in Jesus, whom they had not the least notice of: but they will be tried and sentenced for sins against natural reason, for things within their power and capacity; ³ *because when they knew God, they glorified him not as God; because they held the truth in unrighteousness, so that they are without excuse.*

But, if the Deist shall still insist that though we have justified God from the calumny, as if he would condemn the Gentiles for want of impossible faith, yet still he maintains it to be

² Rom: ii. 11, 12.

³ Rom. i. 18, 20, 21.

unjust

unjust and incredible, that while one small part of mankind enjoys the favour of the Gospel, all under the state of nature shall have the hard measure of *summum jus* ; must be all damned by rigid inflexible justice, without equity or mercy, without any act of pardon, or the least room for repentance : if he will rather obstinately believe, or hope, or wish, that *the God of tender compassions, who loveth all things that he hath made, who will not require much where little has been given, cannot be so extreme* with the Gentile world as to mark all that is done amiss, and yet to slight and overlook those shining examples of virtue not unfrequent among them : if this be all he sticks at, God forbid that on this single account he should exclude himself from the communion of faith. We can allow him this opinion, as at worst a charitable error ; as some indication of a large heart, and a generous love of mankind. But then he must always remember, that even those virtuous heathens, whom he would so gladly place in some part of heaven, can be saved on no other account than by the merits and mediation of Jesus their Saviour. For without his satisfaction there is no remission of sins nor acceptance of repentance ; and without remission of sins ^b *by the deeds of the law and natural righteousness no flesh can be justified in*

^b Rom. iii. 20.

the fight of God. They are saved therefore, if they be saved at all, by the sole benefit of Christ, though in this life they could not know nor thank their benefactor. For though they lived in the earliest ages of time, long before his incarnation, yet even then they might be *purified by the blood of the Lamb, manifested indeed in latter times, but preordained before the foundation of the world:* so that from the first origin of it he might extend and impart, to all that were worthy, the efficacy of his merits, and the privileges of faith and grace, and a share in the inheritance of glory and immortality.

II. And now we may expect that our adversaries will put off the garb and character of Deists, and make a new attempt for the fortune of the day, under the arms and conduct of the Jews.

It must be granted on all hands, that the Messias, whensoever he is manifested to the world, must appear in that very manner as the Jewish prophets describe him. All the characters must hit and correspond one to another; the same features, the same lineaments visible in both; the one the shadow and picture, and the other the substance. Now, say they, it is evident from the prophets, that the Messias is to be a temporal

• 1 Pet. i. 20.

prince,

prince, to sit on the throne of David his royal ancestor, and to make Jerusalem the seat of an universal and perpetual empire. But the character of Jesus is as different from this description, as a stable from a palace. It is true, we Christians endeavour to shew a similitude between them by figurative interpretations of Scripture; which we call the spiritual and mystical sense, but they call arbitrary and precarious, as having no foundation in the native and naked letter, which is not to be racked and wrested from its obvious meaning, little credit being to be given to such extorted confessions.

Thus far our objectors. But I suppose the prophetic language and character is better understood than that this surmise should pass without a just answer. Indeed, if it were in this case alone that the expressions of the prophets need a figurative interpretation, the exception might appear fair and plausible: but it cannot be denied, that on many other occasions, besides the matter of the Messias, their discourse (after the genius of the eastern nations) is thick set with metaphor and allegory: the same bold comparisons and dithyrambic liberty of style every where occur. Which is an easy and natural account (besides the more secret reasons that the Holy Spirit might have) why the kingdom of the Messias, though

though really spiritual and not of this world, is so often dressed and painted by them with the glories of secular empire. For when *the Spirit of God came upon them*, and breathed a new warmth and vigour through all the powers of the body and soul; when by the influx of divine light the whole scene of Christ's heavenly kingdom was represented to their view, so that their hearts were ravished with joy, and their imaginations turgid and pregnant with the glorious ideas: then surely, if ever, their style would be strong and lofty, full of allusions to all that is great and magnificent in the kingdoms of this world. But then, in other passages of the same prophets, as it were on purpose to hint to us the true meaning of the former, the Messiah is described plainly, without poetical colours, *to be a person of low condition; to have no form nor comeliness in him; a man acquainted with sorrows, and numbered among transgressors*; and by other characters so clear and express, that some of the Jewish rabbies, to elude so strong a conviction, have maintained and propagated an absurd opinion, as if two Messiahs were foretold by the prophets; the one a triumphant monarch, the other an unfortunate and afflicted person. What will not perverse and refractory minds take hold of, rather than submit to an unwelcome truth?

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It is evident then, that the kingdom of Christ, so magnified in the prophetic style, is a spiritual kingdom. And yet, to be free and ingenuous, we must own that the whole nation of the Jews mistook the meaning of those passages. Even our Saviour's own disciples were not exempted from the common error. And the whole posterity of that people are pertinacious in it to this day; which to many is a mighty prejudice against the credit of the Gospel. What! as if it were such a matter of astonishment, that they obstinately adhere to the literal sense, which promises them a temporal kingdom, with worldly honours and pleasures! an interpretation both specious in itself, and agreeable to their proud hopes and carnal apprehensions, which are miserably defeated and disappointed in Jesus. There seems to be nothing so very unnatural and unaccountable in this. But then that very disappointment, so far is it from being an objection, that, to a sagacious mind and uncorrupt judgment, itself is a convincing proof that he was truly the Messias. For let us reflect upon the state of those times. It is certain, in fact, that the whole nation was possessed with an inveterate persuasion that the Messias was then a coming; and it is as certain, that Jesus the son of Mary professed himself that Messias. Let us argue now upon human

human reasons, and the common principles of action. If he was not the true Messias, we are then to consider him as an ordinary Jew, of mean quality and education. Now, to give any tolerable account why such a one should pretend himself to be the Messias, there are but two ways possible: either he was acted by ambitious designs, which he hoped to compass by that imposture; or by a complexional and natural enthusiasm, verily imagining himself to be the Messias. I suppose I scarce need to say, that both these suppositions are fully confuted by every word and action of his life. But, what I now observe is this, that upon either of those principles, whether ambition or enthusiasm, he would certainly have acted the part of the Messias in such a character as men then ascribed to him; according to the popular expectation, and the received notion of those times. Now the whole nation expected that the Messias was to be a great general, to rescue them from the Roman power, and to *restore the kingdom to Israel*. It is certain then, that upon either of these two motives he would have blown the trumpet to rebellion, and attempted their deliverance. Ambition would have animated him to it, as the only way to his hopes and wishes. Or, if enthusiasm had inspired him, what would he not have

have promised and assumed to himself? *To fight the battles of the Lord; to execute vengeance upon the heathen; to bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron.* Such were the designs of Barcocab and some other impostors of old: setting up to be the Messias, they put their followers in arms, and proclaimed liberty to the people. Not so the blessed Jesus: but, when the multitude would have made him their king, he withdrew himself even by miracle to avoid it. He did not summon to arms, but to repentance and newness of life. He had a kingdom indeed; *but not of this earthly Jerusalem, but of that which is above.* He was truly their deliverer: *but* not from the Roman yoke, *but* from the more slavish yoke of the law, from the more wretched bondage to sin and death. Was this the air and language of ambition? Was this the mien and spirit of enthusiasm? Nay rather, does not nature herself cry out and declare, that for one of his low condition and vulgar education, to profess himself the Messias in so surprising a manner, in a character so unthought of, by an interpretation of prophecies so spiritual and divine, so infinitely better than the literal meaning, against the universal prejudice of the nation, and the hopes and solicitations of his very followers, was certainly a thing more than human; an

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invincible testimony that he was really the Christ, and *his doctrine from God, and not of men.*

But our adversaries have another objection still behind ; and our answer thereto will put an end both to it and to the present discourse. And this objection is borrowed from the law of Moses ; which, say they, having a promise of eternity annexed to it, to be *an everlasting covenant, a perpetual statute, a covenant of an everlasting priesthood*, ought of necessity to be continued and confirmed by the true Messias : whereas Jesus endeavoured to abolish it, and thereby wholly subverted the credit of his own pretensions. But we answer in our Saviour's declaration, ^d *that he came not to destroy the law, but to fulfil it.* We are to distinguish then between the moral part of the Mosaic law, and the political and ceremonial. As to the rites and ceremonies, it is apparent they had no intrinsic nor moral holiness in them, no natural tendency to promote the happiness of men ; nay rather they were inconvenient and grievous, *a yoke of bondage and servile discipline, which none were able to bear.* Even the rewards and penalties, which enforced their observation, did not naturally flow and result from them, as effects from

^d Matth. v. 17.

proper causes ; but they were miraculously added to them by the sole virtue of the divine promise. It is true, they were fit and proper for the ends of their institution ; to be types and shadows of better things to come ; to preserve the people from idolatry, by allowing no intercourse nor commerce with other nations. But, it is evident for that very reason as well as many more, that those ceremonies were neither calculated for eternity, nor modelled for mankind in common : so that when the reasons of their sanction no longer continued ; when the things they typically represented were come to pass ; when *the wall of partition was to be removed*, and, according to the prophecies, *all nations to be called to Christ, and the ends of the earth to be his possession* ; they must needs be antiquated and abolished, like scaffolds that are removed when the buildings are finished ; since under that new state none of them had any further use, and several of them became impossible to be observed. And, so for the political institutions of Moses, it is plain they were accommodated to the circumstances of affairs, and the necessities of time and place ; not absolutely the very best, but the best that those ages of the world and the genius of that people would bear. As for instance, the toleration of polygamy and causeless divorces ; these

were indulged them, not as most pleasing to their lawgiver, but *because of the hardness of their hearts*, in the words of our Saviour; because they were too stiff-necked and headstrong to admit of a shorter bridle. These civil ordinances therefore, when better precepts were once proposed and accepted in their place, must of necessity drop and die of themselves, and become obsolete without any repeal: just as the temporary edicts in war, and the agreements of the cartel, do expire of their own accord, when the peace is concluded. But then the moral part of the law of Moses, which is the sap and marrow, the soul and substance of the whole, that indeed is of eternal and universal obligation. But then who can say that this is abrogated and cancelled by Jesus? So far from that, that every branch of it is ingrafted and incorporated into his Gospel. In this best of senses therefore the Mosaic law is confirmed and fulfilled by our Saviour. For morality is a thing immutable; and, unless human nature itself should be new moulded by our Maker, vice and virtue must be always what they have been. So foolish was the cavil of the Deists against our Saviour's descent from heaven; because he gave no other lectures

• Matth. ix. 8.

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of morals, than what nature and reason had taught before. Nay, if he had taught us the reverse of those morals, this had been an objection indeed. But in that even the divinity of his doctrine most eminently appears; that the finger of God upon the tables of our hearts, and the pens of the inspired writers in the volume of the Gospel, have prescribed us one and the same lesson. As for us, whose employment it is to teach that lesson to others, let us but express it also in our own lives and conversations; let us but add that credit to our doctrine, that reputation to our profession: so may we expect to bring over all our adversaries to the truth and power of religion; so may we expect, when we give the account of our talents, to be received with that blessed approbation, *Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Master.*

SERMON

UPON

POPERY,

PREACHED AT CAMBRIDGE,

November 5, 1715.

2 Cor. ii. 17.

For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God, speak we in Christ.

OUR text, as it exhibits to us two contrary characters, of *many that corrupt the word of God*, and of *some that handle it in sincerity*, may fitly represent the two different views of the Church under Popery and the Reformation; and may furnish a proper discourse for the solemnity of this day: when we are met to commemorate the public deliverance from one of the most impious and bloody attempts, that even Popish pravity and corruption either contrived or favoured.

But the text will be still more proper to this anniversary occasion, when we have attained to the true and full sense of it, as it lies in the original. For our English translators have not been very happy in their version of this passage. We are not, says the Apostle, *καπηλεύοντες τὸν λόγον τοῦ Θεοῦ*: which our translators have rendered, we do not *corrupt*, or (as in the margin) *deal deceitfully with* the word of God. They were led to this by the parallel place, ch. iv. of this Epistle, ver. 2. *not walking in craftiness, μηδὲ δολῶντες τὸν λόγον τοῦ Θεοῦ*, nor *handling the word of God deceitfully*: they took *καπηλεύοντες* and *δολῶντες* in the same adequate notion; as the vulgar Latin had done before them, which expresses both by the same word, *ADULTERANTES verbum Dei*: and so likewise Hesychius makes them synonyms, *ἐκκαπηλεύειν, δολᾶν*. *Δολᾶν* indeed is fitly rendered, *adulterare*: so *δολᾶν τὸ χρυσόν, τὸ οἶνον*, to *adulterate gold or wine*, by mixing worse ingredients with the metal or liquor. And our translators had done well if they had rendered the latter passage, *μὴ δολῶντες τὸν λόγον*, not *adulterating, not sophisticating the word*. But *καπηλεύοντες* in our text has a complex idea, and a wider signification: *καπηλεύειν* always comprehends *δολᾶν*, but *δολᾶν* never extends to *καπηλεύειν*: which, besides the sense of *adulterating*, has an additional notion of

of unjust lucre, gain, profit, advantage. This is plain from the word κάπηλος, a calling always infamous for avarice and knavery : *perfidus hic caupo*, says the poet, as a general character. Thence καπηλεύειν, by an easy and natural metaphor, was diverted to other expressions, where cheating and lucre were signified : καπηλεύειν τὸν λόγον, says the Apostle here ; and the ancient Greeks, καπηλεύειν τὰς δίκας, τὴν εἰρήνην, τὴν σοφίαν, τὰ μαθήματα, to corrupt and sell justice, to barter a negociation of peace, to prostitute learning and philosophy for gain. Cheating, we see, and adulterating is *part* of the notion of καπηλεύειν : but the principal essential of it is sordid lucre. So *cauponari*, in the famous passage of Ennius, where Pyrrhus refuses the offered ransom for his captives, and restores them *gratis* :

*Nec mi aurum posco, nec mi pretium dederitis,
Non cauponanti bellum, sed belligeranti.*

So *nundinari*, *negotiari*, when used in the like metaphor, have a double aspect both to fraud and to profit ; but the primary one to the latter. And so the Fathers expound this place : τὸτό ἐστι καπηλεῦσαι, says St. Chrysostom, ὅταν τις χρημάτων πωλῇ, ὅπερ δωρεὰν εἶδει δεῖναι. This is καπηλεύειν, when any one sells that for money, which he ought to give freely. So St. Ignatius, where he paraphrases our text, calls them

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Χρησίμποροι in an elegant compound : Χρησίμποροι, says he, τὸν λόγον καπηλεύοντες, καὶ τὸν Ἰησοῦν πωλῶντες, *traffickers and traders in the Gospel, sellers of Christ*: and Greg. Nazianzen with the like elegancy, Χρησικάπηλοι. So that in short, what St. Paul says, καπηλεύοντες τὸν λόγον, might be expressed in one classic word, λογιμποροι or λογοπραῖται; where the idea of gain and profit is the chief part of the signification. Wherefore, to do justice to our text, we must not stop lamely with our translators, *corrupters of the word of God*; but add to it as its plenary notion, *corrupters of the word of God FOR FILTHY LUCRE*: in which true version we shall find the specific character of Popery, which in all and every deviation from primitive Christianity, made worldly profit and advantage its principal design; as my present discourse shall endeavour to shew you.

But before I enter upon that, I must crave leave to set another thing right in the text, where our translators have failed. *For we are not*, say they, *AS MANY, which corrupt the word of God*: but the original has not ὡς πολλοὶ, but ὡς οἱ πολλοὶ, *as the many*; as the multitude. These two senses are very different: *as many* may still be the lesser part; *as the many* must always be the majority: *as many* must mean here Christians only; *as the many* may include the heathens too: ὡς οἱ πολλοὶ,

πολλοὶ, *as the world does, as the generality does.* Οἱ πολλοὶ, *the multitude, the community,* is a known expression in profane authors, opposed sometimes τοῖς σοφοῖς, *to the wise,* sometimes τοῖς πλουσίοις, *to the rich:* and ever denotes the *most*, and generally the *meanest* of mankind. And it were to be wished, that our translators had either known this better, or better attended to it. There are few places in the New Testament, where πολλοὶ comes with the article; and the most of those few are much injured in our translation. This learned audience will easily forgive me, if I here enumerate them all; being both a proper illustration of our present text, and very worthy of our observation for their own merit and importance.

Luke vii. 47. Ἀφίενται αἱ ἁμαρτίαι αὐτῆς αἱ πολλαί: here our translators have competently rendered it, *her sins, which are many, are forgiven;* though it might have been more easy and literal, *her many sins, her numerous sins, are forgiven.* But if αἱ πολλαί here had been confounded with πολλοὶ without its article, then the version would have been, *many of her sins are forgiven:* an interpretation, manifestly defective; and, as exclusive of some of her sins, manifestly false.

Rev. xvii. 1. our translators were not so fortunate: *come hither, and I will shew thee*
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the judgment of the great whore, that sitteth, say they, upon MANY WATERS; where the impropriety is visible: for how can one person be supposed to sit upon many waters at once? But the original is not ἐπὶ πολλῶν ὑδάτων, but ἐπὶ τῶν ὑδάτων τῶν πολλῶν, upon the many waters, upon the vast, wide, and spacious waters: for it is known, that πολὺς is often applied to continued quantity, as well as to discontinued; to magnitude and dimension, as well as to number.

Romans xii. 5. *For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office, οὕτως οἱ πολλοὶ ἐν σῶμά ἐσμεν ἐν Χριστῷ, so we being many, say our translators, are one body in Christ.* This version indeed is tolerable; but it had been better to render it literally, *so we the many (οἱ πολλοὶ) are one body in Christ: where it is plain that in this construction, in this opposition to one, the many denote the whole multitude, the complex and aggregate body of Christians.* And this will enable us to clear up another place of much greater consequence; Rom. v. where, after the Apostle had said, v. 12. *that by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed UPON ALL MEN, (εἰς πάντας ἀνθρώπους,) for that all have sinned: in the red- dition of this sentence, v. 15. he says, for if through the offence (τῆ ἐνός) of one (οἱ πολλοὶ) many*

many be dead, (so our translators,) much more the grace of God by (τῷ ἑνὶ) one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded (εἰς τοὺς πολλοὺς) unto many. Now who would not wish that they had kept the articles in the version which they saw in the original? *If through the offence of the one (that is, Adam) the many have died; much more the grace of God by the one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto the many.* By this accurate version, some hurtful mistakes, about partial redemption and absolute reprobation, had been happily prevented: our English readers had then seen, what several of the Fathers saw and testified; that οἱ πολλοὶ, *the many*, in an antithesis to *the one*, are equivalent to πάντες, *all*, in v. 12. and comprehend the whole multitude, the entire species of mankind, exclusive only of *the one*. So again, v. 18, and 19, of the same chapter, our translators have repeated the like mistake: where, when the Apostle had said, *that as the offence of one was upon ALL MEN (εἰς πάντας ἀνθρώπους) to condemnation, so the righteousness of one was upon ALL MEN to justification: for,* adds he, *as by (τῷ ἑνὶ) THE ONE man's disobedience (οἱ πολλοὶ) THE MANY were made sinners; so by the obedience (τῷ ἑνὶ) of THE ONE (οἱ πολλοὶ) THE MANY shall be made righteous.* By this version the reader is admonished and guided to remark, that *the many* in v. 19. are the
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same as πάντες, *all*, in the 18th. But our translators, when they render it, *MANY were made sinners, and MANY shall be made righteous*, what do they do less, than lead and draw their unwary readers into error? and from these observations, I have some suspicion, that in the famous passage, Heb. ix. 28. *so Christ was once offered to bear the sins OF MANY*, εἰς τὸ πολλῶν ἀνεγκεῖν ἁμαρτίας, as our present copies read it; I am much persuaded, I say, that if the oldest MSS. were nicely examined, some of them would shew us, instead of εἰς ΤΟ πολλῶν, εἰς ΤΟ ΤΩΝ πολλῶν; *to bear the sins of THE MANY*: that is, as before, τῶν πάντων, of the *whole race* of men, exclusive of himself: agreeably to that of St. John, 1 Epist. ii. 2. *He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also FOR THE WHOLE WORLD*; and to that of St. Paul, 1 Tim. ii. 6. *Christ Jesus, who gave himself (ἀντίλυτρον ὑπὲρ πάντων) a ransom for ALL*. For it cannot appear improbable, that the article should be dropped here, when we find it actually slipped in another place of this epistle, Heb. xii. 15. *Looking diligently, lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby MANY be defiled*, διὰ ταύτης μianθῶσι πολλοί. Thus all the printed books, and the generality of MSS: but the famous Alexandrine, and another at Oxford, have μianθῶσιν οἱ πολλοί.

πολλοί *left* THE MANY *be defiled*, the multitude, the populace, the congregation : which certainly is the more elegant, nay the genuine reading, and ought to be assumed into the public editions.

We are now arrived at a full and adequate interpretation of our text. *For we are not as* (οἱ πολλοί) *the many*, the major part of the world, (καπηλεύοντες,) *which adulterate and negotiate the word of God for our own lucre and advantage ; but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God, speak we in Christ.* And hereby we have made the nearer advances to a clear view and just character of Popery : we will allow them to be the οἱ πολλοί, *the most* as well as the *worst* of Christians ; nor at present will contend with them about their boasted titles of Catholic and Universal : for it was never yet so well with mankind, that the major part was the better. And then for the other mark, καπηλεύοντες, I shall now trace and expose their corruptions and cauponations of the Gospel : that they are true Χριστέμποροι, real Χριστοκάπηλοι, have perverted and abused the divine institution to the base ends of worldly profit and power ; have consociated Jesus with Belial, Christianity with Atheism : every part of their system, which our pious reformers renounced and exploded, being founded upon
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mere politic, built up and supported by the known methods of subtlety and force.

And yet I would not be thought to charge every single member of that communion with this heavy imputation. I question not but great numbers think and act in godly sincerity: every age has produced among them some shining examples of piety and sanctity. We do not now consider individuals, but the collective body of Popery; not private lives and secret opinions, but the public avowed doctrines, and the general practice of the managers. There was one pious family even in Sodom, and without doubt many wicked ones even in Jerusalem. Not every single person within the limits of the Reformation is as good as his profession requires; nor every Papist as bad as the Popish system permits.

And now, τί πρῶτον, τί δ' ἔπειτα? What can I better begin with, than what our text suggests; their enhancing the authority of the vulgar Latin above the Greek original: so that we must search for St. Paul's meaning here, not in the notion of *καπηλεύοντες*, but of *adulterantes*; not of αἱ πολλοί, but of *multi* without its article; an original defect in the Latin tongue. Now can any thing be more absurd, more shocking to common sense, than that the stream should rise above the fountain?

tain? that a verbal translation, which, were the author of it inspired, must yet from the very nature of language (as has appeared above) have several defects and ambiguities; that such a translation, I say, by a private unknown person not pretending to inspiration, should be raised and advanced above the inspired Greek? Is it possible those that enacted this, could believe it themselves? Nor could they suggest, that the first Greek exemplar had been more injured by the transcribers and notaries, than that of their version. More ancient MSS. were preserved of this, than they could shew for the Latin. There were more, and more learned commentators to guard it; no age of the eastern empire without eminent scholars: while the west lay sunk many centuries under ignorance and barbarity. And yet, in defiance of all this, the Latin is to be the umpire and standard; and the Apostles to speak more authentickly in that conveyance, than in their own words. Nay, a particular edition shall be legitimated and consecrated, with condemnation of all various readings; and two Popes, with equal pretence to infallibility, shall each sanctify a different copy with ten thousand variations. These things are unaccountable, in the way of sincerity: but if you view them on the foot of politic, as an

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acquest of power, authority, and preeminence, the council of Trent knew then what they did.

But though this itself is but a translation, yet no secondary translation must be made from it for the instruction of the people. They must hear the public liturgies in a language unknown to them; and jabber their *Credos* and *Pater-nosters* at home without understanding. But was not this Latin version at first the common language of the country? was it not first made, and received into public use, because the Greek was unknown there? If a Christian congregation may be duly edified, may pay acceptable devotions in a language unknown, the Greek original might have reigned alone and universal, and its Latin rival had never existed. Why then is Popery so cruel and importune, to withhold this common blessing? to continue the public worship in Latin, after it has ceased to be a living language, against the very reason that first introduced Latin? Seek not a good account for this in Scripture, not even in the Latin Bible; but seek it in the vile arts of politics, and the principles of Atheism. Their authority was secured by it over an ignorant populace; it gave a prerogative to the clergy: like the *ισρά γραμματα*, the sacred and secret writings

writings to the Egyptian priests ; or the Sibylline oracles to the Roman *pontifices*, which no body else was to know.

No sooner had Christianity spread itself over the world, but superstition mixed and grew up along with it ; a weed natural to human soil, complexionally inherent in the weaker sex, and adventitious to most of our own. Vast multitudes of all nations withdrew from the world ; renounced human society, and all commerce with their own species ; abandoned the cities and villages for the solitude of woods, deserts, and caves ; under a false notion of pleasing God better, by such devotion and mortification. But all this was at first pure and simple superstition ; no mixture of avarice and craft in it, no tincture of politic and worldly advantage : their known poverty and perpetual austerities wholly quit them of that suspicion. But how did Popery manage this foible of mankind to its lucre and interest ? Under a pretence of a like retirement from the world in a life of prayer and contemplation, they began their monasteries, abbeys, nunneries, &c. which by degrees so vastly multiplied, that, instead of their first pretence of retreating from the world, the very world was filled with them : instead of the old hermitical poverty, they had drained the riches of kingdoms, had engrossed the fattest of the lands ;

· nay, had appropriated and devoured the very ministerial wages, the bread and sustenance of the parochial clergy; who were impoverished, made vile and contemptible, to feed these vassals of the Popes in their laziness and luxury.

In the early ages of the Gospel, there was a high and just veneration for the sepulchres and remains of holy men, for the memorials of them in statue or picture, for the places of their abode; and especially for the land of Palestine, which the Patriarchs, the Son of God and his Apostles, had made sacred by their birth and habitation. This at first was within due bounds; but superstition was soon engrafted on it, and grew to excess: the remains and relics were supposed to work miracles; the images had not value only, but worship and adoration; long journeys were taken, to the great detriment of families, to visit holy places, and kiss the footsteps of saints and martyrs. These bigotries, though even then reprehended by the best fathers of those ages, were yet without any mixture of craft and knavery. But Popery soon saw that here was a proper fund, to be improved and managed to great advantage. Instead of coercion and restraint, they advised, encouraged, commanded those superstitions, with such scandalous *καπηλεία*, such abominable traffic, as even

even Paganism would blush at. All the graves and catacombs were exhausted to furnish relics: not a bone, not the least scrap of raiment of any saint, that was not removed into the holy wardrobe, to raise money to the shewers. Where the monuments were dubious and blended, the names and bodies of Pagan slaves were taken into the Church calendar and treasury: disputes and quarrels arose among the numerous pretenders to one and the same relic, which could never be decided; but the victory was various and alternate, according to the fruitful inventions and ingenious lies of the contending impostors. Even statues and pictures of the same saint were made to rival each other; and the blessed Virgin, like Juno Lucina, and Juno Sospita, had as many *numina* and specific powers, as she had pictures and statues; one celebrated for one virtue, another for another. No piety was thought acceptable, no life religiously spent, without a pilgrimage to some foreign saint, where vows and rich offerings must be paid at the shrine. But above all, the endeavour to gain the Holy Land, by driving out the Saracens, was the most promising project, the very masterpiece of Popery. What arts were used, and what not used, to inveigle the princes and nobility of Europe into that romantic expedition! Every hour of grief or

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sickness, every hour of mirth and wine, were a snare and trepan to them. If in any of those softer moments they once rashly took the cross on their garments, the vow was irrevocable ; to break it was thought attended with all misfortunes in this world, and damnation in the other. In the mean time, salvation, like soldier's pay, was promised and insured to all that embarked : the heavenly Jerusalem to be their certain acquisition, though they failed and perished in fighting for the earthly. Now while the world by these artifices was made mad and infatuate ; while princes abandoned their own realms, and left the regency in weak or treacherous hands ; while for several generations all Europe was exhausted of its strength and its wealth, and the remainder overrun with superstition and leprosy ; the contrivers of all this were not wanting to their own interest. It was then, in the absence of so many kings, and the distracted condition at home, that Popery made its most plentiful harvest : then cities with their large territories were extorted out of the owner's hands, and made the patrimony of the Church : then investitures, faculties, dispensations, bulls, the whole shop and warehouse of profit and power, were extended and exerted over all persons and employments : then, in a word, was mankind enslaved, and Popery trod upon the necks of princes.

princes. And well was it for Palestine, that the Saracens kept possession of it. If Popery had succeeded in its attempt on that country, what a new revenue from pilgrimages! what an inexhaustible store of religious merchandise! every stone there would have been a sacred relic. If we may guess from some histories, the very soil would have been dug up and exported by this time, and customers invited to the purchase by a new legend of miracles. Not a church in Europe would have been counted holy, not a palace or seat lucky or prosperous, not an estate, not a field or close, fertile to the owner, that had not some of the holy earth to bless and to sanctify it.

When the empire was first Christian, though the bishops of Rome had no more under their inspection than the suburbicarian regions; yet the great city imperial, the metropolis of the western world, gave them a just preeminence above those of inferior and municipal towns. And so, those of Constantinople had a due deference paid them by the other bishops of the east, as βασιλεύτεροι ἄλλων, presiding over a diocese the most numerous and the most potent. A fit regard always was and ought to be had to their advice, concurrence, and assistance; since their example must needs have the greatest influence on the peace of the whole Church. Now, how did Popery make use of this advan-

tage of situation, to make spiritual Rome as much the empress of the Church, as ever civil Rome had been of the state? In long tract of time they reduced all under their power; not by our Saviour's declaration, *Ἐπὶ ταύτῃ τῇ πέτρᾳ, Upon this rock I will build my Church*; as if that was the Tarpeian rock, and the cliff of the Roman Capitol: but by the subtlest arts of politic, continued from age to age with indefatigable address; by sowing factions among all other bishops, and promoting appeals to the arbitration of Popes, who always decided for those that owned their authority; by creating new bishops against those in possession; the event whereof was both ways the certain increase of Papal power; for either the Pope's new title prevailed, or the former bishop, after long charge and vexation, was content for quietness sake to keep his own, as the gift of the Pope by an after act of confirmation. And as they then managed with the bishops, so in time they dealt with princes; fomented rebellions of their subjects; set brother up against brother in pretence to the crown; who was to own it, when obtained, as a donation from Rome; and the contract for it, that all the ecclesiastical dignities should be in the Pope's collation. By these methods, continued through many successions, the result at last was, that he was the spiritual monarch of the

the universe, the acknowledged patron of all church preferments : that all bishops held their jurisdiction not from Christ, but from him : that kings themselves were no kings, till accepted and confirmed by him : that they might be resisted, deposed, or murdered, if they did not govern by his dictates and directions : that he, as visible head of the Church, was superior to general councils : that he, perhaps at first some ignorant monk, after he was once chosen Pope, though without the suffrage either of clergy or people, by a mercenary conclave and nocturnal cabal of cardinals, a new order contrived by Popery to depress and subdue the bishops, was immediately gifted with infallibility. O horrible profanation of a divine attribute ! O audacious and ridiculous claim ! which, though no Pope can ever believe of himself, and the cardinals his electors, like the *haruspices* of old, may laugh at when they see each other ; yet it is an useful pretence in the way of politic, and of great moment among the adoring crowds to support and establish his usurped spiritual empire. . . .

As the Christians in the first ages were all educated in the midst of Paganism, and the most of them made converts out of it ; so it could not be avoided, but that many must assume or transfer some Pagan notions into the system of Christianity. Besides the one
supreme

supreme God, the Pagans had vast numbers of inferior deities, who had every one shares of the common devotion. This begot in many Christians a like worship of angels and saints, as mediators and intercessors between them and the heavenly Father. The *Dii Manes* of the Pagans, and the parentations to their dead ancestors, produced a near resemblance to them among some Christians, that offered solemn prayers and expiations for the souls of their deceased relations. The Platonic notion, that the *ἰάσιμα ἀμαρτήματα*, the curable sins, the deplorable stains, of departed souls, were scoured and purged off by proportionate punishments ;

———*aliæ panduntur inanes*

*Suspensæ ad ventos ; aliis sub gurgite vasto
Infectum eluitur scelus, aut exuritur igni ;*

must naturally raise among some Christians a like persuasion about a future purgatory. These notions and practices, though quite repugnant to the holy Scriptures, were not discouraged nor forbid by Popery ; but propagated, enjoined, and enacted ; being a most sure and ample fund to increase the Church's treasure. In course of time the whole calendar was crowded with saints ; not a day in the year without its red letter : every trade and profession had its saint tutelar and peculiar ; who must be retained and engaged with presents
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and oblations. Horses, cows, and sheep, every animal domestic, the fields and the vineyards, the very furniture of houses, must be annually blessed and sanctified, at a set price for the blessing: and if the old set of saints should by long time grow cheap and vulgar, there still was a reserve in Popery to enhance and quicken the low market, by making new and fresh ones in acts of canonization. And then, by their prayers and the masses for the dead, to ease and shorten the pains of purgatory; what a spacious door was opened for a perpetual flow of money! What family was not daily pillaged of some part of its substance? What heart could bear, that his dead father should fry in the flames of purgatory, when a moderate sum might buy him out of them? Or, who would not secure himself by a timely legacy for masses for his soul, without leaving it to the conscience and courtesy of his heir?

But what do we speak of this Popish traffic for the sins of the dead; when the very sins of the living, the wages of damnation, were negotiated and trucked, indulged or pardoned, by the wicked politic of Popery! As in common life we daily see, that an officer shall permit and license those very frauds for money, which his office itself constitutes him and commands him to prevent; so has Popery done in
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that great affair of a Christian life, and the duties of the Gospel. To engross which profitable trade, it was first necessary, that Rome should challenge the sole custody of the keys of heaven and hell; should claim the sole power of loosing and binding; should possess the sole mint of all spiritual licences and pardons. When this was once arrogated and obtained, what an impious *καπηλεία*, what an extensive traffic was opened! As the other schemes drew in the superstitious and the bigots, so this was to wheedle and pillage the profane, the impure, the villains of the world. The common sale was soon proclaimed for indulgencies and pardons, for all crimes past or to come, already committed or hereafter designed: the price raised and enhanced according to the deeper dye and blackness of the guilt. The stated market at Rome was not sufficient for the commerce; the princes only and the nobles could afford to send thither for them: so that, for the ease and benefit of trade, blank instruments were issued out for all the countries of Europe, and retailed by the spiritual pedlars at the public markets and at the private doors: such a cheap pardon cried aloud for the more common sins of lying, swearing, drunkenness, or fornication; a higher price in private for robbery or murder; a higher still for sodomy or incest. Thus were the
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the grace of God, the remission of sins, all the privileges of the Gospel, trucked and cauponnated by Popery, for sordid and detestable lucre, upon the open scheme and the bare foot of Atheism.

It is true indeed, that when the light of the Reformation broke out, and good letters revived and spread around, even the Popish provinces grew too wise and sagacious for this gross imposture; such wretched wares were thenceforth chiefly vended among the poor ignorants of America. But there soon arose a new set of loose and profligate casuists; who, to engage on their side the libertine part of mankind, since impunity in sins would no longer be bought with money, should distribute it gratis, and instruct them to be wicked without remorse and with assurance. These are they, who (contrary to St. Paul, Rom. iii. 8.) *are not slanderously reported to say, Let us do evil, that good may come*: who excuse and patronize the vilest corruptions, the foulest cheats, forgeries, and extortions in common dealing: who teach, that no faith promised or sworn to heretics, or enemies, is of any obligation: who defend common perjury and perfidiousness by the scandalous shifts of equivocals and mental restrictions: who have glossed and warped all the severe rules of the Gospel about chastity, charity, and forgiveness, to the worldly and wicked

wicked notions of gallantry and point of honour : who sanctify the horridest villanies ; murders, plots, assassinations, massacres, (like the intended one of this day,) if designed for the service of the Church : who, in a word, have given such vicious systems of moral, such a license to corrupt nature, as a Heathen Stoic, Platonic, or Academic, nay, an Epicurean, though in himself never so wicked, durst not have polluted his pages with, out of reverence to his sect.

I might proceed, would the time permit me, to discover all the rest of their politic arts, the mysteries of their spiritual trade : for such are all their peculiar tenets, that were discarded at the Reformation. What availed it to the clergy, that the Scriptures expressly said, *marriage is honourable in all : let a bishop, let a presbyter, be the husband of one wife ; one that ruleth well in his own house, having faithful children, kept in subjection with all gravity.* This did not suit with Popish politic : this tried and attached the clergy to the common interest of mankind : their affection to their own children made their country also dear to them ; made them love and pity the abused laity : they were not vassals devoted enough to the service of a foreign master : the riches of the Church did not flow in one channel, nor all revert at last to that one fountain and receptacle.

ceptacle. And for these pious reasons, in spite of plain Scripture, of the authority of ages before, of all the lusts and impurities that must necessarily follow, a chaste legitimate marriage shall be forbidden to the clergy, and an adulterous celibacy shall be enjoined universal.

But what can plain Scripture avail against the avarice and pride of Popery ; when both common sense internal, and the joint testimony of all our outward senses, must submit to its decrees, when it is to advance its profit or power ? That due respect ever paid to τὰ ἁγία, the consecrated bread and wine at the holy communion, was easily raised by superstition and ignorance to the highest excess, to notions improbable and impossible. This fair handle was not neglected by Popery : by slow degrees transubstantiation was enacted into an article of faith, and a very beneficial one to the priests ; since it made them the makers of god, and a sort of gods among the people. But we must think better and juster of the contrivers of it, than that they themselves believed it : they did or could believe it no more, than a proposition made up of the most disparate ideas, that *sound may be turned into colour, a syllogism into a stone*. It was not ignorance, nor stupidity, but the most subtle and crafty politic, that produced transubstantiation. Thence the awful pomp, the august caval-

cavalcades in the proceſſion of the hoſtie ; as if they would outdo the Pagan ones of Cybele ;

*Ingratos animos, atque impia pectora vulgi
Conterrere metu quæ poſſint numine Divæ :*

Thence the preſence of God continually reſident, corporeal at the high altar : thence, to exhibit it perpetually there, the wafer, *panis azymos*, unleavened unfermented bread, was taken into the ſolemnity, both againſt ancient practice, and the perpetual cuſtom of the Greek Church ; becauſe common bread would ſoon have grown mouldy, and not paſs with the palate of the multitude for the body of God : thence, at laſt, in the thirteenth century was the cup denied to the laity ; not for not ſeeing the plain words of the Scripture, *Drink ye ALL of this* ; not for the dearneſs or ſcarcity of wine, which is cheap and common in thoſe climates ; not for the then pretended reaſon, that the muſtaches or whiſkers in the mode of that age uſed to dip into the holy cup ; but becauſe it was inconſiſtent with the reſt of the ſhow. So ſmall a quantity of wine even after conſecration would ſoon grow dead and vapid ; would diſcover its true nature, if taſted after long ſtanding. The wine therefore, becauſe it interfeſes with the ſtanding ceremony and continued pageantry of tranſubſtantiation,

substantiation, has not the honour to be reposed with the wafer on the altar, nor to accompany it in the solemn processions.

I might now go on to shew you a more dismal scene of impostures, their *judicia Dei*, the judgments of God, as they blasphemously called them, when no human evidence could be found : their trials by ordeal ; by taking a redhot iron in the hand ; by putting the naked arm into hot boiling water ; by sinking or swimming in pools and rivers, when bound fast hand and foot : all of them borrowed or copied from Pagan knavery and superstition ; and so manageable by arts and flights, that the party could be found guilty or innocent, just as the priests pleased, who were always the triers. What bribes were hereby procured ! what false legacies extorted ! what malice and revenge executed ! on all which if we should fully dilate and expatiate, the intended tragedy of this day, which now calls for our consideration, would scarce appear extraordinary. Dreadful indeed it was, astonishing to the imagination ; all the ideas assembled in it of terror and horror. Yet, when I look on it with a philosophical eye, I am apt to felicitate those appointed for that sudden blast of rapid destruction ; and to pity those miserables that were out of it, the designed victims to slow cruelty, the intended objects of lingering persecution.

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secution. For, since the whole plot (which will ever be the plot of Popery) was to subdue and enslave the nation, who would not choose and prefer a short and dispatching death, quick as that by thunder and lightning, which prevents pain and perception, before the anguish of mock trials, before the legal accommodations of gaols and dungeons, before the peaceful executions by fire and faggot? Who would not rather be placed direct above the infernal mine, than pass through the pitiless mercies, the salutary torments of a Popish inquisition; that last accursed contrivance of atheistical and devilish politic? If the other schemes have appeared to be the shop, the warehouse of Popery; this may be justly called its slaughterhouse, and its shambles. Hither are haled poor creatures (I should have said rich, for that gives the frequentest suspicion of heresy) without any accuser, without allegation of any fault. They must inform against themselves, and make confession of something heretical; or else undergo the discipline of the various tortures; a regular system of ingenious cruelty, composed by the united skill and long successive experience of the best engineers and artificers of torment. That savage saying of Caligula's, horrible to speak or hear, and fit only to be writ in blood, *Ita feri, ut se mori sentiat*, is here heightened and improved:

proved : *Ita se mori sentiat, ut ne moriatur*, say these merciful inquisitors. The force, the effect of every rack, every agony, are exactly understood : this stretch, that strangulation is the utmost nature can bear ; the least addition will overpower it : this posture keeps the weary soul hanging upon the lip ; ready to leave the carcase, and yet not suffered to take its wing : this extends and prolongs the very moment of expiration ; continues the pangs of dying without the ease and benefit of death. O pious and proper methods for the propagation of faith ! O true and genuine vicar of Christ, the God of mercy, and the Lord of peace !

And now, after this short but true sketch and faithful landscape of Popery, I presume there is but little want of advice or application. If this first character in the text belongs to Popery, let us secure the other to ourselves, *that we handle the word in sincerity, as of God, as in the sight of God in Christ*. The Reformation without this must forfeit its name, and the Church of England must lose its nature. *Let every one therefore that thinks he stands, take heed lest he fall*. Our very text informs us, that in the Apostle's own days, when the Church was in its greatest purity and simplicity, there were even then *many* *καπηλοι*, *fraudulent dealers*, among its members ;

bers ; though the traffic must needs run low, when the whole community was so poor. But when the emperors became Christian, and the immense revenues of the Pagan priesthood were (as indeed they ought to be) all confiscated and distributed ; without doubt the spoil and the plunder attracted crowds of new converts, and the courtiers found it useful to declare themselves good Christians. Even the Reformation itself did not make the slower progress for the vast riches of the monasteries that were to be dissolved ; nor had it been less honour to it, if, as the lands and manors of the abbeys were justly restored to the laity, so their impropriations had reverted to the parochial clergy, from whom they had been robbed. To say the truth, the spirit of Popery is near as old as human race : it is in all ages and places ; and even then exerts itself, when it demolishes Popery. The generality of men, *οἱ πολλοὶ*, were always *κἀπηλοι*, traders in a profession. The Epicureans of old, though they denied and derided the Heathen gods, would yet gladly accept of a fat benefice, *opimum sacerdotium* ; and, to gain an ample revenue, would officiate at those altars which they silently laughed at. Think not therefore, that all the priests were the vilest of men ; but that some of the vilest of men got in to be priests. They saw the opportunity of enslaving

ing and pillaging mankind, if they could but manage the priesthood upon atheistical principles. This was the temptation, this gave the original to Popery ; and nothing to be accused for it but human nature in common. What profession, what conjunction of laymen, if not continually watched, if not curbed and regulated by authority, have not abused the like advantage and ascendant in their several ways, to their private emolument, and the oppression of the public ? Let us watch therefore against this fatal degeneration, incident to all things. He that aims *malis artibus* to arrive at Church preferment, by sinful or servile compliance, by turbulency and faction ; what is he but *καπηλος*, a *trafficker* for sordid lucre ? He that zealously vends his novelties, or revives dead and buried heresies to the disturbance of the community ; what is he but a *trader* for the fame of singularity ? He that labours to dig up all the fences of the Church ; to throw down her articles and canons, her liturgy and ceremonies ; to extinguish her nurseries of learning ; and when he has made her a mere waste and a common, shall call that a comprehension ; what is he but a vile *factor* to libertinism and sacrilege ? He that propagates suspected doctrines, such as praying for the dead, auricular confession, and the like, whose sole tendency is the gain and power of the priest ;

what is he but a *negociator* for his partizans abroad? What does he but sow the seeds of Popery in the very soil of the Reformation?

But if we are to watch against the silent tide of Popery in the small rivulets at home; much more against its inundation and deluge from abroad: which always meditates and now threatens to overwhelm us. If foreign Popery once return, and regain all the provinces that it lost at the Reformation; O the terrible storm of persecution at its first regrefs! O the dark prospect of slavery and ignorance for the ages behind! In tract of time, it will rise again to as full a measure of usurped hierarchy, as when the hero Luther first proclaimed war against it. For then was Popery in its meridian height: it was not raised up all at once, but by the slow work of many centuries. In all the steps and advances of its progress, the good men of the several ages opposed it, but in vain; they were overborne by a majority; were silenced by the strong arguments of processes and prisons: for it first subdued its own priests, before it brought the laity under its yoke. Good letters became a crime even in the clergy. Or heresy or magic, according to the different turn of men's studies, was a certain imputation upon all that dared to excel. And though Popery, since the Reformation, has even in its own quarters permitted

mitted learning and humanity, and prudently withdrawn some of its most scandalous trumpery; yet if once again it sees itself universal, the whole warehouse, now kept under key, will again be set wide open: the old tyranny will ride triumphant upon the necks of enslaved mankind, with certain provision against a future revolt. The two instruments, the two parents of the Reformation, ancient learning, and the art of printing, both coming providentially at one juncture of time, will be made the first martyrs, the earliest sacrifice to Popish politic. The dead languages, as they are now called, will then die in good earnest. All the old authors of Greece and Italy, as the conveyers of hurtful knowledge, as inspirers of dangerous liberty, will be condemned to the flames: an enterprise of no difficulty, when the Pope shall once again be the general dictator. All these writings must then perish together: no old records shall survive, to bear witness against Popery; nor any new be permitted, to give it disturbance. The press will then be kept under custody in a citadel, like the mint and the coinage: nothing but mass-books and rosaries, nothing but dry posfills and fabulous legends, shall then be the staple commodities, even in an university.

For the double festivity therefore of this candid and joyful day; for the double deli-

verance obtained in it, the one from the conspiracy of Popery, the other from its tyranny ; for the happy preservation of our religion, laws, and liberties, under the protection of pious and gracious princes ; for the flourishing estate of learning, and the prosperity of our nursing mother ; be all thanks, praise, and glory to God, for ever and ever. Amen.

A S E R M O N

PREACHED BEFORE

KING GEORGE I.

February 3, 1716-7.

Rom. xiv. 7.

For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself.

OUR Apostle having in this chapter and before discoursed of the mutual duties and obligations in human life, concludes the whole with the words above, sententiously in way of aphorism, *That no one liveth to himself, and no one dieth to himself.* Which without doubt must seem a harsh paradox to a narrow-minded person, that is wholly involved and contracted within his own little self, and makes his private pleasure or profit the sole centre of his designs, and the circumference of all his actions. Indeed, the Heathen poet in the epigram,

gram, a man of that very stamp, as *sitting in Pagan darkneſs and the ſhadow of death*, teaches the downright reverſe to our text; *Vive tibi*, ſays he, *nam moriere tibi*. He took it as ſelf-evident, *That every one dies to himſelf*; and therefore infers it as a conſequence both plain and profitable, *That every one ought to live to himſelf*. But our inſpired writer has here taught us a new and Chriſtian leſſon, a doctrine which is the ſource and ſpring of all true piety to God, of juſtice and beneficence to men, of public ſpirit, and all the other ingredients of heroic and godlike virtue: a doctrine too ſo pregnant of ſenſe and truth, that it may be conſidered in various views, all different from each other, and all worthy of our ſerious ſpeculation. I cannot now undertake to exhaust them all, in ſo ſhort a diſcourſe as is preſcribed by the occaſion; but I ſhall place before you ſome of the principal, at leaſt ſome of the moſt general and obvious, which may furniſh a proper hint, and riſe to your own further meditations.

I. *None of us*, ſays the Apoſtle, *liveth to himſelf*. To live to a man's ſelf, when conſidered at large, is to do all the actions of life with regard to himſelf alone; as a true free-born ſon of earth, not accountable to any other being for his behaviour and conduct; but carving out his own ſatisfaction in every object

object of desire, without any obligation or relation to a higher power. Now, in this sense, I conceive, it is sufficiently plain, that none of us liveth, ought to live, or can live, to himself. It is the thoughtless Atheist alone that can be guilty of such absurdity, to imagine the first parents of human race sprung naturally out of the mud, without the foresight and efficiency of an intelligent cause. Every one, I say, but an Atheist, (if an Atheist can now possibly be, under the powerful light of the Gospel, and the late advances in natural knowledge, which directly lead and guide to the discovery of the Deity,) every one else must needs see and acknowledge, that an almighty and all-wise God was our Creator; and, consequently, that we live to him, the sole author of life, and not to ourselves. All our powers and faculties, all the properties and perfections of our nature, were gratuitously given us by the good will of our Maker, without our own asking or knowing. We neither produced our own being, nor can we annihilate it; we can neither raise it above, nor depress it below the original standard of its essence, derived to the whole species. *Which of you, says our Saviour, Luke xii. 25. which of you by taking thought can add one cubit to his stature?* And so also may we say, which of us creatures, by all our thought and industry, can add one specific power

power to our beings, more than God has bestowed upon them? It is true indeed, we may either exert or clog our native faculties in different degrees; we may either invigorate them by exercise and habit, or damp and stifle them by sloth and neglect; so that the same person under one education and tour of life would extremely differ from himself, had he fallen under another. But with all our endeavours we can exalt none of our faculties above their original pitch; we can never raise the aqueduct above the level of the fountain-head; we cannot advance our species, or change our human nature to a superior class of being; we must all continue in our settled rank and degree, as God was pleased to place mankind in the great scale of the creation: it is the will and decree of God, that we are what we are; and as we are all his creatures, the work of his hands, his servants of such particular station, we do all *live* to him, and *not to ourselves*.

II. But then, Secondly, besides the title of creation, even on the account of our conservation, we so entirely subsist upon the power and will of God, that in this view also we must needs confess, that *none of us liveth to himself*, but to him. For, as God at first by his almighty power produced the world and all creatures out of nothing; so, by a perpetual

petual efficacy and emanation of the same power, he sustains them all from relapsing into nothing. It is concluded, I think, among all those that have well considered these matters, that the same divine energy, which gave a being to any creature, must be constantly and incessantly exerted to continue it in being. Could we suppose the great Creator but for one single moment to suspend and interrupt the communication of that power, the whole frame and system of nature must immediately drop and vanish into its primitive nullity. Every essence therefore, except his own eternal and immutable essence, is solely supported by him, and owes to him not only the first production, but the continuance of its being. From him alone depend not only *the breath of our nostrils*, the operations and instruments of mortal life, but the very existence of our souls and bodies: upon his invariable will, upon his inviolable promise, rest all our hopes of future glory, and all the prospect of happy immortality. This the voice of reason dictates to us; and the authority of holy Scripture puts it out of question; *for in him*, says our Apostle, Acts xvii. 28. *we live, and move, and have our being*. And if we all live and exist *in him*, much more do we live *to him*, and none of us *to himself*.

III. But again, Thirdly, the proposition,
now

now our text, may be considered in another view, not only with respect to God, our creator and preserver, but with reference to the several parts of the creation itself. If we survey the whole system of it, as far as human understanding and industry have yet advanced; we shall not find one single thing made absolutely for itself, but to bear likewise some office, some subservience to the uses of its fellow creatures: the all-wise Author of the universe having so contrived every part of his work, that they are all coherent and contributive to each other; and, by their mutual operations, conduce every one its share to the economy and beauty of the whole. Thus, astronomy informs us, that the moon, not barely made to *govern our night*, though so very useful to our earth by reflecting the sun's rays to it, receives again the like benefit from our earth, in a greater measure than she gives it. It were very easy, if this occasion was proper for it, to shew the like relation in all known instances of nature; how every thing conspires to the general good, and was made for each other, as well as each for itself, and all for the glory of their Maker. It is enough to say once for all, what true philosophy assures us, that every least particle of body, every atom of the world, has its operation and passion perpetual and reciprocal with all the rest
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of the world besides it : such an alliance being established between all the matter of the universe, that the whole is linked together by mutual attraction or gravitation, working regularly and uniformly according to quantity and distance ; which is the great instrument in the hand of God to support the permanent frame of things in the same posture as at first it was constituted. Now if all the visible world be thus made for each other ; how dare we entertain the thought, that we alone should be made to live to ourselves ? Some indeed have had the vanity to assert, that all the world was made for the use of man, and man for his own enjoyment : a very insolent presumption ; a composition of self-love, partiality, and natural pride ; when we have neither a due knowledge of ourselves, nor of the things about us. By the late improvements of science and art, there are discovered such new regions in the universe, new to us, though as old as our own ; such immense tracts of sky, and innumerable stars, each equal to our sun and his spacious system, which never before entered into man's imagination ; that it is scarce possible to think in earnest, that all those were created for our sakes only : seeing our world was grown old, before we had the least tidings of their very existence. And this may teach us both the modesty and the judgment to
think,

think, that even in the intellectual world there may be numerous ranks and classes of rational creatures, some inferior and many superior to us in the perfections of their several natures. What arrogance therefore for us, for us that probably make so small a figure in the great sum of the creation, to think we only were made exempt from the universal law of service and dependence ! Has not God himself told us, in the Apostle's words, Heb. i. 14. that even the angels themselves *are all ministering spirits* ? But if those glorious beings *live* to subserve and minister to others ; how can we, so far below in natural powers, station, and dignity ; how can we presume we owe service to nothing ; but are made *to live only to ourselves* ?

IV. But, Fourthly, let us now proceed from the natural world to the moral, and in that view we shall still more clearly discover the truth of our text, *That none of us liveth to himself*. Our Creator has implanted in mankind such appetites and inclinations, such natural wants and exigencies, that they lead him spontaneously to the love of society and friendship, to the desire of government and community. Without society and government, man would be found in a worse condition than the very beasts of the field. That divine ray of reason, which is his privilege above the brutes, would

would only serve in that case to make him more sensible of his wants, and more uneasy and melancholic under them. Now, if society and mutual friendship be so essential and necessary to the happiness of mankind, it is a clear consequence, that all such obligations as are necessary to maintain society and friendship, are incumbent on every man. No one therefore that lives in society, and expects his share in the benefits of it, can be said to live to himself. No, he lives to his prince, and his country; he lives to his parents, and his family; he lives to his friends, and to all under his trust; he lives even to foreigners, under the mutual sanctions and stipulations of alliance and commerce; nay, he lives to the whole race of mankind: whatsoever has the character of man, and wears the same image of God that he does, is truly his brother; and, on account of that natural consanguinity, has a just claim to his kindness and benevolence. Not that private offenders are not to be punished with loss of goods, of liberty, of life itself, in proportion to the offence; nor just wars not to be undertaken for the security of national happiness: wars and offences *will come*, (such is the imperfection of human state,) and *we be to them by whom they come*. But then those very severities, the necessary effects of penal laws at home, and of wars and rup-

tures abroad, do all arise and flow from a principle of love and kindness. It is a superior love for the good of the whole community, which makes it necessary to cut off those noxious members of it, as mortified limbs are freely parted with to preserve the rest of the natural body. Certainly the nearer one can arrive to this universal charity, this benevolence to all human race; the more he has of the divine character imprinted on his soul: for *God is love*, says the Apostle; he delights in the happiness of all his creatures. To this public principle we owe our thanks for the inventors of sciences and arts; for the founders of kingdoms, and first institutors of laws; for the heroes that hazard or abandon their own lives for the dearer love of their country; for the statesmen that generously sacrifice their private profit and ease to establish the public peace and prosperity for ages to come. And if nature's still voice be listened to, this is really not only the noblest, but the pleasantest employment. For though gratitude, and a due acknowledgment and return of kindness received, is a desirable good, and implanted in our nature by God himself, as a spur to mutual beneficence; yet, in the whole, it is certainly much more pleasant to love than to be beloved again. For the sweetness and felicity of life consists in duly exerting and employing those

those sociable passions of the soul, those natural inclinations to charity and compassion. And he that has given his mind a contrary turn and bias ; that has made it the seat of selfishness and of unconcernment for all about him, has deprived himself of the greatest comfort and relish of life. Whilst he foolishly designs *to live to himself alone*, he loses that very thing which makes life itself desirable. So that, in a word, if we are created by our Maker to enjoy happiness and contentment in our being ; if we are born for society and friendship, and mutual assistance ; if we are designed to live as men, and not as wild beasts of the desert ; we must truly say in the words of our text, *That none of us liveth to himself.*

V. But again, Fifthly, besides this moral view of the world, if we consider the state of human life, as it is influenced by religion and the Gospel of Christ, we shall yet have a clearer discovery of the truth of our text. For a man truly religious cannot be said *to live to himself*, but to God, to whom he has dedicated his worship and service. The service of God is the first principle and ultimate end of all his thoughts and actions. Even in the smallest affairs of life, *whether he eats or drinks, or whatsoever he does, he does all to the glory of God*, 1 Cor. x. 31. In this he is elevated and engaged to a higher pitch of duty

above the rules and obligations of mere morality ; that in things seemingly indifferent he has still his eye fixed on heaven, how every thing may conduce to God's honour, and to peace and righteousness among men. And in this stricter acceptation, the words are used by our Apostle ; *ἑδὺς ἑμῶν, none of us, of us Christians, liveth to himself, καὶ ἑδὺς, and none (not no man, as in our English version, but none of us Christians) dieth to himself.* Christianity excludes all selfishness, not only in the total and complex of *living*, but in the minutest particulars and circumstances of *life*. For it was a controversy of the smaller size, that gave occasion to our text : it was neither about essential duties of moral, nor important articles of faith ; but about matters of free choice and indifference, of scruples only and infirmities : about observation of days, and distinction of meats ; things of lawful use or neglect to those that knew their own liberty. And yet even in this case our Apostle declares, that both sides had the glory of God in their view, and not an indulgence to their own appetites or opinions. *For he, says he, that observes the day, observes it to the Lord ; and he that observes not the day, to the Lord observes it not : and he that either eats or abstains, to the Lord he doth either, and giveth God thanks.* For none of us, then adds he, *liveth to himself, and*
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none (of us) dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; or whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's. And the truth is, such a general resignation of one's self to God is the first contract, the express covenant of our religious profession. When we first take the badge of Christianity, our very souls and bodies are made an offering to Christ: we have nothing left us, that we may call our own, as separate from his interest and service: we are dead unto the world and to sin, and live to God and to righteousness: we live no longer to ourselves. Christ, says the Apostle, died for all; that they which live, should not thenceforth live to themselves, but to him that died for them, and rose again.

VI. And then, Sixthly, while a good Christian is persuaded that we ought to live unto Christ; in subordination to that duty, he lives to all his fellow members in Christ, to all those for whom our common Saviour suffered. He considers both his natural abilities, and the external blessings of providence, as a talent committed to his care to be employed for the public good, for promoting piety, and virtue, and prosperity among men; expecting at the great day to be called to his account by an all-knowing and impartial Judge. For he sees there is no station or condition of life, no of-

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fice, or relation, or circumstance, but there arises from it such special obligation, that he may truly be said to live to others, rather than to himself.

If any persons can be conceived to enjoy the prerogative of *living to themselves*, some perhaps may imagine, that the monarchs and princes of the world, with the chief ministers under them, have the fairest claim to that privilege; as possessing and commanding in the largest measure all the power, and splendor, and voluptuousness of life. But if things are weighed in the just balance of reason and truth, they perhaps of all others have the least pretence to *self-living*. For though God himself has described them, that they are *gods among men*, as bearing the character and image of divine power and authority; yet all that superiority is solely derived and delegated from him; it is a mere trust put into their hands; they are only commissioners under him, and accountable to him for the discharge of their great office. So that they can the less be said to *live to themselves*, inasmuch as the extent and sphere of their duty is wider than that of others. For, if the ancient remark be always found most true, *That the master of the house is the veriest ser-*

* Εἷς ἐστὶ δούλος οἰκίας, ὁ διακόντης.

vant of all his family, because he has the care and concern for all ; so, if the boldness of the comparison may be allowed, the supreme magistrate himself, and those that are next below him, are the veriest subjects in all his dominions. An inferior magistrate or a private subject hath his service confined within narrower limits ; the prince's and the prime officer's duty extends over the whole : so that by being the masters and protectors of all, they really become the servants of all. They watch, that others may sleep ; they provide by timely thought and long views for the future, that others may rest secure in the possession of the present ; they upon great emergencies run all the hazards of war abroad, that others may dwell in peace and tranquillity at home, And is this to *live to one's self* ? Surely, he that employs and dedicates all his thoughtful hours, that exposes his very life, to the safety of the public, will not be thought to live to himself, but to the welfare of his nation.

But then there is a just return of service due from subjects to their governors ; a faithful loyalty, a cheerful obedience, a reverential honour and esteem. We must pay them the true service of the heart, sincere good wishes and affectionate daily prayers for their safety and success : far less should we be of those that *interpret* all actions of their governors ; that

warp the most innocent occurrences to censure and calumny ; that charge every adverse turn of providence to a failure in their conduct ; always complaining and traducing, so as even to wish for cross accidents in the public administration, to purchase the malicious pleasure of murmuring and accusing. Nor is this tribute of our hearts the only right of our governors : even our possessions too, the gifts of our ancestors, and the very acquiescence of our own hands, are not entirely our own, but in part due to the community ; and ought cheerfully to be paid, when they are lawfully exacted. So that subjects also cannot be said to live solely to themselves, but partly and perhaps principally to their prince and their country.

But at least the wealthy retired person, that enjoys an ample inheritance without the toil and incumbrance of public employments, he perhaps may be tempted to imagine, that he can and may *live to himself*, and his own sole ease and diversions. But let such a one consider, that even in the most private life there are various relations and duties thence arising ; as a husband, as a father, a master, a neighbour, a member of the community, of Christianity at large, of the whole race of mankind : or, besides all these, let him hear the words of the Apostle, *Charge them that are rich in this world,*

world, that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate. Here is the rich man's special duty, here is his peculiar province ; he is constituted a minister and distributor of God's bounty for the relief of those that are helpless, in calamity and want. And if he prove an *unjust steward* ; if he squander his talents in luxury, or hoard them up with uncharitable avarice ; he will at last be found among those cursed and miserable, *who saw our Saviour hungry, and gave him no meat ; thirsty, and gave him no drink ; naked, and clothed him not ; sick or in prison, and relieved him not : for inasmuch as they did it not to one of their poor neighbours, they did it not to him.* Surely therefore the rich persons cannot be said to *live to themselves*, since they are only trustees under God for the poor of the world. And then, as for the poor themselves, they, I presume, of all men will never be suspected as living to *their selves*, whose hard fate and condition in life makes others' pride and arrogance imagine, that they are born and designed for nothing so much as to live and labour for them.

And now having competently shewn, through the several relations and conditions of human life, that none of us *liveth to himself* ; let us proceed to the *second* branch of our text, and
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advance our thoughts and views beyond this world to another. And indeed, if the former proposition be established and allowed, *That no man lives to himself*; it is a short and ready inference from it, *That no man dies to himself*: for death, abstractly considered, is nothing but a mere privation; it is the clause only and the period of life. So that if the whole line of life be in the hands of another, and not in our own; death, which is only the extremity, the last point of that line, must of necessity be in the same hands. If we *live* therefore to God, and not to ourselves; we must needs *die* to him also.

But let none of my hearers so misinterpret our Apostle, as if, by saying *none of us dies to himself*, he taught that none of us could be accessory or contributing to his own death. Without doubt he was not of their opinion, that believe the time, cause, and circumstances of every man's death to be fixed as immovably by God's prescience, as by necessity or fate. God can foresee contingencies, the free resolves of rational agents, as well as the most necessary events in the material and inanimate world: but the divine prescience does not superadd nor imply a fatal necessity. That notion robs us of our freewill, of our reason, of our very soul; is repugnant both to observation, and the revealed word of God. *Bloody*
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and deceitful men, says the royal Psalmist, *shall not live out HALF their days*; so that impiety and guilt deprived them of half that space of life, that in a natural course of things they might have arrived to. And does not daily experience teach us, that intemperance, temerity, and violence cut men off in the flower of their age, and in the very meridian of life? And again, how many are daily reprieved and rescued from the very jaws of impending death, by the saving care and skill of the physician! But then withal, though the space of life may be thus *shortened*, and the thread of it broken by such accidents, (though even those too come to pass, not without the foreknowledge and permission of God,) yet perhaps it can never be *lengthened* by all the power and wisdom of man. A flower or fruit may be plucked off by force before the time of their maturity; but they cannot be made to outgrow the fixed period, when they are to fade and drop of themselves. The hand of nature then plucks them off, and all human art cannot withhold it. And as God has so appointed and determined the several growths and periods of the vegetable race; so he seems to have prescribed the same law to the various kinds of living creatures. In the first formation and rudiments of every organical body, there are contained the specific powers both of
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its stature and duration. And when the evolution of those animal powers is all exhausted and run out, the creature expires and dies of itself, as ripe fruit falls from the tree. So that, as we cannot add one cubit, one inch, to our stature ; so neither can we add one day, one hour, to our years, beyond that fixed limit of natural life, to which our original frame and constitution was made to extend. So certain is it, that none of us either liveth or *dieth* to himself, but all of us to God ; who has given to each of us his particular body, with the determined powers and period belonging to it.

2. But then again, besides our dying to God, even in reference to men, we die to others, and not to ourselves. A good Christian should in every stage of life act all to God's honour, and the good of mankind ; but especially at his departure, in that last scene of mortality, which is most observed by the spectators. *His light*, in our Saviour's language, *should always so shine before men, that they may glorify the Father, that is in heaven :* but particularly in that last glimpse of life, when the lamp is going out, it ought to break forth in an extraordinary lustre. The view of approaching death removes all such disguises and varnishes, as at other times are suspected to conceal or colour men's actions and opinions. Every man at the dying hour is pre-
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sumed to speak his true sense of things ; so that the words and behaviour of a departing soul has the most powerful influence on the minds of the living. And as Sampson slew more of the Philistines at once at his death, than in all the victories of his life before ; so an Apostle or a confessor of Christ has made more converts to the Gospel at the scaffold or the faggot, than by all the labours of his former ministry. And it was this design and view, that made so many of the primitive Christians even breathe and thirst after martyrdom. To die solitary in a bed, amidst the tears of a few friends, was an afflicting consideration ; it was their daily and ardent prayer, that the last act of their lives might rather be exhibited on the theatre of the world, to confirm and seal publicly with their blood, what before they had propagated in more private assemblies. It is true indeed, and blessed be God's providence for it, that such examples as these need not, cannot, be copied by every one. Where God has given peace and tranquillity to his Church, and brought the civil power itself under the easy yoke of the Gospel, the laurels of martyrdom do not grow there. But however, in the general, it is the duty of every one, within the sphere of his acquaintance, as far as his example can influence, as the nature and circumstances of his sickness may

may permit, to glorify his Maker and Redeemer at his death, at his passage from this short life to an endless immortality. So that none of us can be said to die only to ourselves, but to God, and to those that survive us.

3. But then, last of all, let us extend and enlarge our view even beyond the prospect of death and the grave ; and we shall find that even in those everlasting dwellings prepared for the good and the bad, none shall live to himself, but one to another. Even the torments of the damned, *where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched*, will receive a vast accession of misery and woe from the mutual *weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth*. Even there they will not *live* and suffer to themselves ; but the pains of each will be multiplied and enhanced by the horrible concert and universal accents of sorrow and lamentation. But the idea of this is too frightful to be dwelt on ; it curdles the very blood, and subdues the imagination. Let us rather transfer the fancy to a more agreeable image, the blessed station of saints and angels, those regions of light and joy ; where they *die indeed no more*, neither to themselves nor others, but *live* immortally to God, and to all the glorified company. For even heaven itself, without communion and society, would lose half of its relish : even there, to live eternally *to one's self*,

self, has some notion in it and tincture of torment eternal. No selfishness inhabits there; they compose a celestial quire, perpetually celebrating the praises of God in hallelujahs of gladness and devotion. Each soul has its living spring, an ebullition of its own joy, incessantly receiving from and adding to the general happiness. As all receive without measure from the same fountain of light; so one happy soul reflects to another reciprocal rays of pleasure and amity. The contemplation of the divine wisdom, the admiration of his transcendent goodness, of the infinity of his power, displayed in all his works, eternally subminister to the whole adoring society fresh anthems of praise, fresh raptures of love, and fresh congratulations of the common felicity. May the God of heaven then so fill up the number of his elect, that millions of millions there may surround his throne, and make up an assembly worthy of those great and glorious mansions. To which God of his infinite goodness bring us all, through the merits of Jesus Christ our Saviour and Redeemer. Amen.

THE END.





